

PLUCK AND LUCK

THE STAR ATHLETIC CLUB
OR, THE CHAMPIONS OF THE RIVAL SCHOOLS

By RICHARD R MONTGOMERY



At the word of command the three swimmers pushed the floating tree trunk in front of Jack Fair's shell. It was evidently their intention to interfere with the Star's crew so they would lose the race.

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CHAPTER I.—The Day Before The Great Boat Race.

In these days when athletic sports and physical culture are recognized as essential adjuncts to the mental training of our schoolboys, it had come to be very generally admitted that Ashford possessed many natural advantages as an academic town, for nearby was a large and beautiful lake and a broad river, so, of course, the boys of Ashford indulged in aquatic sports to their hearts' content, and each year the great academic boat race was an event of supreme interest and importance to the school and to the town, particularly when the rowing men of the Star Athletic Club, which was made up of boys from Ashford Academy, were pitted against their traditional rivals of the Brookdale Athletic Club, an organization composed of boys from Brookdale Academy.

The towns of Ashford and Brookdale were only about ten miles apart, and there was not only between the two academics the strongest rivalry, but the sentiment extended to and included the people of the respective places. Brookdale was a newer and richer town than Ashford, and there was more wealth there. The public buildings were superior, and the Brookdale Academy, with its fine athletic grounds and handsome clubhouse, was the envy of the Star Athletic Club boys of Ashford.

But if the latter club had not as fine school buildings or clubhouse, and grounds, they had at least a new clubhouse, which had been built with money earned by the club in the various Tri-State Academic contests in which they had participated.

At this date the Star's new clubhouse was just about completed, and the club had planned to have a grand house-warming and opening hop a few nights later.

Now of all the clubs belonging to the Tri-State League, the Stars most feared the Brookdale Club, for they were the strongest aggregation of boy athletes in three States, as their record clearly proved until the last year, when the Stars pressed them close for first place and the league championship prize.

It was only at the first of last year that Jack Fair was elected president of the Stars, because

he had become the all-around champion of that club, and all the members of the same well knew that it was to Jack's ability in managing and training the club that they were indebted for the surprising success that had attended their recent efforts on the athletic field.

Jack Fair was just eighteen, and you would have to make a long search to find a boy of his age, whose appearance was more the ideal of what a young athlete should be. He was tall and lithe, without being thin, and his muscles were so evenly developed that his figure left nothing to be desired.

It was the hour of sunrise on a bright, cloudless morning, the day before the date set for the annual boat-race between the rowing eight of the Stars and the Brookdale crew, and Jack and his men were on the way to their boathouse on the river, where they kept their racing shell.

"Today we shall do the last real work of our training for the great race with Brookdale," said Jack to his particular chum, Dick Brent.

"Yes, and I feel it in my bones that those swells will give us a tug for it."

"Hello!" exclaimed Ned Dudley, the smallest of the crew, who was therefore coxswain, of course, "there's Tom Porter, the champion of the Brookdale Club."

Jack and the others looked up the river-road in the direction which the little coxswain indicated, and they saw a man and a boy seated in a one-horse buggy, which was swiftly approaching.

At the same moment, and before Jack Fair could obtain more than a glimpse of Tom Porter and his companion, the occupants of the vehicle pulled their hats down over their eyes and turned their faces in the opposite direction. Almost immediately, too, the buggy was driven out of the river-road and into a highway, which ran through a strip of woods, and thence across country to Brookdale.

"Well, this is a queer go!" piped Joe Carr, one of the racing crew, whose squeaky voice had won him the nickname of "Jay Bird." "Tom Porter and the man with him acted as if they didn't want us to recognize 'em! I wonder what the Brookdale captain is doing ten miles from home at this early hour in the morning?"

"Tom Porter is crooked enough for anything. The buggy came from up the river and our boat-

house is situated half a mile up stream. Porter wouldn't have tried to hide his face if he hadn't been up to something that wasn't on the square," said Ned Dudley, the lightweight of the crew.

"Oh, as to that, Indian Island Hotel is quite near our boat-house, and Tom Porter and his uncle, Mr. Blake, whom I recognized as the lad's companion, may have been to the riverside hostelry. I've often seen Blake there, and he and old Dike, the landlord, seem to be quite chummy," Jack Fair replied.

"Well, I do hope we may not find that our new racing shell has been tampered with. But I'm afraid we are in for bad luck," drawled Dick Brent, dolefully.

"Let's make a dog-trot of it to that boathouse and settle the question," proposed Joe Carr, in his squeaky voice.

"All right, Jay Bird," assented Jack, and away the eight scampered up the river-road.

The boathouse was on the bank a few hundred yards south of the old Indian Island Hotel, which took its name from an island in the center of the lake from which the river flowed. The eight men soon reached their boathouse, and Jack, who carried the key, hastened to unlock the door. The boys were so anxious about the safety of the new racing shell in which they all hoped to defeat the Brookdale crew on the morrow, that they almost tumbled over each other in their eagerness to get inside.

Eight pair of eyes aided by eight pair of hands looked over and handled the shell all at once as they crowded around it, and in a moment all knew that the boat was uninjured.

Willing hands laid hold of the shell, and ran it down the slide. Off came sweaters and caps, and bareheaded and clad only in sleeveless rowing-shirts and trunks, the lads took their places in the light and graceful craft.

Jack Fair had trained his crew vigorously. They had dieted wisely and they rowed in excellent form. Each man had acquired the art of fastening his eyes on the neck of the man in advance of him, and to keep time with him exactly, with no glances to right or left, and not attempt to row by himself. The eight feathered their oars as one man and caught the water together, throwing the strength of the stroke on the earlier part and then pulling it through, they raised oars without clipping and dropped them properly.

Of course Jack was captain and the stroke. Joe Carr was number one in the bow. A boy called Horace Lee was number two and the third man was named Sam Turner. Dick Brent was number four and as he was the heaviest of the eight he was put in the center. The next were Mark Scars and Ben Smith and the seventh man—he who had the all important task of watching the stroke, and passing his motions on to the rest, was a level-headed, silent chap, whose parents had called him Alexander Nailor, but in the boys' world he was known only by the convenient cognomen of "Nails."

The crew had a long row up the river at an easy pace, and when the sun had risen higher, dispelling the morning mist and tinting the crest of every wave and ripple with the gleam of its golden light, they rowed back to the boathouse.

Coming down stream Jack put the lads to the pace and they made several splendid spurts.

"The Brookdale chaps will have to have on their rowing clothes if they beat us tomorrow," said the young captain, as they walked away from the boathouse, after seeing that the door was locked.

The other lads, all save the croaker, had got into their sweaters and made tracks for home and breakfast before Jack was ready to go.

The two chums sauntered along slowly, and presently Jack continued:

"I say, Dick, I've got to go over to Indian Island after a while. Before the governor left for the city yesterday he gave me quite a sum of money—two hundred dollars—and told me to pay it to old Huxley this morning. It seems the governor bought a lot of timber from the strange old hermit owner of Indian Island. What do you say? Will you row over to the island with me?"

"Of course?" assented Dick.

"Then come around to the dock at our lumberyard by ten o'clock."

"All right. I'll be there."

Jack's father was a well-to-do lumber dealer, and he had a large yard and dock on the lake-front above the town.

The lads were presently walking along one of the streets which led in the direction of their homes, and they had passed the Ashford Bank, of which Jack's father was a director and heavy stockholder, when they met a pale, slender, effeminate-looking young man by the name of Roy Clayton, who was employed as a clerk in the bank. Anyone who was a judge of character would have been convinced at sight of him that the young clerk was a weak and easily influenced person.

The two boy athletes knew Roy Clayton very well, and if he had no other claim to consideration or note, he had the distinction of being the brother of the prettiest girl in town, and to tell you isn't any secret, though Jack cherished such a delusion, the latter was an ardent admirer of pretty Mattie Clayton, and very much wanted the right to consider her his best girl.

As Jack was nothing if not diplomatic, he now greeted Roy in a very friendly way, and much to his surprise and delight, the youthful bank clerk put a dainty little note in his hand, saying, with a knowing smile:

"I was told to hand you this."

Jack reddened a bit as he recognized the handwriting, for that was by no means the first note that he had received from Miss Mattie, and as he walked on with Dick he hastened to read the missive. But judging from the expression which his ingenious countenance assumed, he was not altogether pleased with the perusal. It is, however, necessary that we should only quote the concluding paragraph, in which his fair and perhaps somewhat coquettish correspondent said:

"And now, Jack, you must really win the boat-race tomorrow, for I was foolish enough to let Tom Porter banter me into making the promise that I would go with him to the picnic at Indian Island next week if his crew won, and I want to go with—you know who."

On pretty Mattie's account Jack was already jealous enough of the champion of the rival athletic club, and naturally her note only served to increase this sentiment.

CHAPTER II.—On Indian Island.

At about ten o'clock Jack went up to the dock or lakeside landing at his father's lumber-yard. In his pocket he carried the two hundred dollars which his father had instructed him to give to old Huxley in payment for a bill of lumber, as he had informed Dick Brent.

As he expected to meet Dick at the dock, he was of course a little disappointed when he found Dick was not there, and after waiting for half an hour he concluded something had happened to detain his chum, and so he got into his rowboat and started for the island.

As he proceeded the wind increased in violence, and he soon found that it would be impossible for him to make old Huxley's landing, which was situated at the extreme northern end of the island.

A less expert oarsman would have been alarmed and in peril, but the coach and captain of the Star rowing men kept his head and his nerve, though the waves rolled high and often dashed over his small boat.

Indian Island is about half a mile long and nearly as wide. For the most part it is well wooded, and at this date the only inhabitant was old Huxley. It was a popular legend that in early life he had been disappointed in love, and that he had then gone to live a lonely hermit existence on the island. Forty years ago land was cheap in that part of the country, and Huxley had purchased the island almost for a song, as one may say.

At the northern end of the water-guarded and isolated domain the recluse had erected a substantial loghouse and a boat landing—just a small log pier with rude steps and conveniences for tying up lake craft. During all the years that had since elapsed Huxley had lived alone on the island, save for the short periods in the winter season when he employed a number of woodmen to cut timber in his extensive forest.

In the spring the island herewith had the logs rafted across the lake to the town of Ashford, where he found an excellent market for the timber, Jack's father having for years been one of his best customers.

Fortunately for him Jack managed to keep his frail boat right side up until he was within less than a quarter of a mile of the nearest point of the island, though an ordinary boatman would probably have been swamped an upset at a much earlier stage of the tempestuous voyage. But just as he was beginning to think he was all right to reach the southern end of the island, the wind came bellowing out of the north with new force and fury, casting up great white-capped waves upon him, and suddenly right ahead he saw the breakers of Chum Reef, a long, dangerous run of rocks that extended along the southern shore of the island and of which for the moment he had scarcely thought.

Manfully Jack struggled against the wind and the waves, to maintain a course that would carry him south of the reef. And though he was drenched by the waves that broke over his boat, which was dashed about like a cockle-shell, he managed to keep it right side up until at last he sped by the most southerly extremity of the outlying rocks, and a few moments subsequently his

boat was dashed upon the sandy beach, right at the extreme lower point of the island.

"Good enough!" cried the lad joyfully, as he drew the boat up well beyond the reach of the encroaching waves.

Having shook the water from his clothes he set off at a jog-trot along the shore, going northward in the direction of Hermit Huxley's log-house.

When he had traversed about half the length of the island, always keeping to the beach where his progress was unimpeded and the sun beat down warmly, he turned into a path made by woodsmen when they hauled logs to the water, and so proceeded into the woods and along a range of low hills that ran almost the entire length of the island.

At last Jack came out into the clearing at the northern end, and before him he saw the log-house of the recluse. No indications of the presence of Huxley met the lad's sight, and he went directly to the closed door of the house and rapped. Receiving no answer, he tried the door, which yielded under his hand, and he entered the lonely dwelling. The small, rudely furnished interior was unoccupied.

"Mr. Huxley!" shouted Jack, but there was no reply, and he began to think the recluse was not at home. Having repeated his call he looked into the rear room, and so convinced himself that at least the man whom he sought was not within the dwelling, for it contained only the two rooms which he had inspected.

Going out of the house, Jack walked out on the landing and saw that Huxley's boat was not there.

He scanned the surface of the lake, which was still rough, though the high gale was slowly subsiding, but though he directed searching glances in every direction he saw nothing of the hermit, and just at that time not a single craft of any kind was visible on the lake.

"I may as well take it easy," thought Jack, and he became seated on the little dock. Then, to make sure it was all right, he took from his pocket the money which he meant to pay to Huxley. The two hundred dollars was all in new, crisp banknotes, and Jack counted them over, wishing the money belonged to himself, that he might use it to purchase a new racing shell and other athletic appliances which the Stars were in need of.

Just as he was returning the money to his pocket the lad gave an abrupt start and looked in the rear, for he thought he heard footsteps "crunching" on the sand. Though he saw no one, he imagined that he did catch a glimpse of the vanishing shadow of a man just across the strip of sand that lay between the boat landing and a grove near the log dwelling. So fully was he impressed with the belief that a man had just passed in among the trees there that he sprang to his feet and cried out:

"Hello, Mr. Huxley, I want to see you!"

Quite astonished because he received no reply, Jack ran across the sand and into the grove, calling as he proceeded:

"Hold on, Mr. Huxley! Father sent me over to pay you!"

But still no response was returned, and he looked about among the trees without seeing anyone. Jack began to feel just a little bit "spooky." He knew, positively knew, that he had seen the

vanishing shadow of a man. There was no reason why he should suppose that anyone save Huxley was about, but anyhow, why should anyone run away from him? The question was too much for Jack, and he didn't try to answer it, but he went back to the landing and waited, though impatiently enough, until long after noon, and then, feeling half-starved, for he was blessed with an appetite that demanded three square meals a day, having neither seen nor heard anything of Huxley or anyone else, he made up his mind to go home.

He followed the same path that had brought him to the northern end of the island, and he was nearing the point where it comes out on the beach when the sounds of men's voices suddenly arrested his busy footsteps. Glancing ahead he caught sight of two rough-looking men whom he knew he had never previously set eyes on. They were seated under a tree near the path, and a clump of bushes lay between them and the log trail. But the bushes were not thick enough to prevent the keen-eyed lad from seeing that one of the men carried a leather handbag slung from his shoulder by a strap. The men did not look like tramps, and Jack was quiet amazed to see, as the man with the bag raised his hand, that he wore upon it a magnificent diamond ring. The next instant he was considering nothing save how to avoid the two strangers, reach his boat and get away from the island without falling into their clutches, for he heard one of them say:

"The young chap can't leave the island without goin' in his boat. He came along this path and he'll pass this way going to his boat. It would be throwing good money away to let him get off with the roll I saw him counting. We'll just stop him when he comes along and make him give up."

Jack did not wait to hear what reply the other man made to this proposition, but leaving the path, he proceeded as noiselessly as possible through the woods in the direction of his boat. But, as he said himself, his luck was evidently taking a day off, for a dry stick upon which he chanced to step broke with a loud snap under his foot before he had taken half a dozen paces. Then he heard a sharp exclamation from the rear, and looking back as he broke into a run, he saw the two strange men coming after him.

"Hold on, there! Huxley sent us after you!" called out one of the strangers.

But Jack was convinced that he had no desire to do business with the self-appointed agents of the old hermit, and he was off like a shot. The two men dashed after him, and a thrilling race ensued. The lad's pursuers shouted threats that were intended to intimidate him, but he paid no attention to them. Jack was holding his own in the race, and even gaining on his pursuers, when he stumbled and fell heavily.

CHAPTER III.—How the Great Race Was Rowed.

The two strangers set up an exultant shout as they saw Jack go down, but theirs was but a short-lived triumph, for he was upon his feet in an instant, and being uninjured he ran on even more swiftly than before. He was a trained runner, and he had won many a hotly contested race

on the tanbark track, and so when he presently dashed out on the open beach, the men who were chasing him had simply no show at all. They evidently recognized this obvious fact, for when he had gained some distance and almost reached his boat they gave it up. Glancing back, he saw they had come to a halt, puffing like a pair of animated bellows. Jack pressed on, and coming to his boat ran it into the water and jumped aboard. Then he waved his hand at the exhausted ruffians, calling out mockingly:

"Ta-ta! I'll see you later!"

The wind was in his favor and he sent his little boat flying over the lake in the direction of the town, and in a very short time he landed at the dock of the lumber yard whence he had come. And, naturally, he congratulated himself that he still had the two hundred dollars safe in his pocket. Going down the street he came to a tennis court where a number of young men and women of his acquaintance were playing, and among them was Tom Porter, the Brookdale champion, who was some relation of the owner of the court, whom he frequently visited. Everyone but Tom Porter had a friendly word for Jack. But the rival champion greeted the lad coolly. Someone asked Jack how he felt about the outcome of the coming boat race, and he declared he was sure that his crew would win. Hearing that, Tom Porter said blusteringly:

"I'll bet you even money you don't win. Come, let's see if you dare back your own crew."

Now, Jack's father did not approve of betting, and the lad usually respected his opinion, but all the girls and boys present looked as if they depended upon him to sustain the Stars' reputation for "sporting blood," and Mattie Clayton was watching him. He wanted to bet, but still he hesitated. He had only ten dollars of his own money in his pocket, and as it seemed to him that Mattie's expression became scornful he pulled out the ten and said to Tom Porter:

"I'll bet you ten even."

"Bah! I don't bet that small. 'I'll make you a man's wager. But I forgot, since they say your respected governor keeps you on a mighty stingy allowance, I don't suppose you can cover my money. I'll bet you a hundred dollars even," said Porter tauntingly, and he pulled out a roll of bills and flourished them in Jack's face.

Jack's face flushed, for it was quite true that his father gave him but a small allowance. Some of the girls tittered, and that made Jack angry and reckless, though he was pleased to see that Mattie not only did not laugh, but looked sorry for him. The truth was that Tom Porter was simply bluffing. He had no idea that Jack would take his bet, and truth to say, at heart he was by no means as confident of winning the boatrace as he would have people believe. But almost before he realized what he was doing, Jack yielded to temptation, just as many another good but high-spirited boy has done under similar circumstances, and pulling out the banknotes which his father had entrusted him with, he shouted defiantly:

"You can't bluff me, Tom Porter! I'll take your hundred at even money, and another on top of it if you dare! Now let's see who's on short allowance."

"Geewhitaker! Somebody fan me or I'll have a fit!" piped Joe Carr, otherwise Jay Bird, in his

squeaky voice, as he pretended to be about to fall to the ground at the sight of Jack's money.

And then the latter had his triumph, for Porter had only a hundred dollars, and he had to say so. Of course, the laugh was on him, and having put up his hundred with Jack's in the hands of Jay Bird, who was chosen stakeholder, he left the tennis grounds a very much taken-down bluffer.

"Thank goodness the governor won't be home until the day after the boat race. But if we lose it's all up with me. Father will never forgive me for losing his money. He'll call it stealing. Oh, Joe, I wish I had not made the bet," said Jack, looking very much troubled as he walked home, accompanied by Jay Bird.

Meanwhile, as Jack and his boyish comrade were on their way to the home of the former, Tom Porter was leaving town. He had said that he meant to go home to Brookdale directly, but he did not do so. On the contrary, he called at a stable for his horse, which he had left there on his arrival in Ashford that afternoon, and mounting, rode up the river road to the Indian Island Hotel. Going to the stable he had a private confab with a rascally-looking fellow called Nick Price, who was employed there as the hostler. While they were talking Porter led the way out behind the stable, and presently if anyone had been watching him such a person might have concluded that he was saying something about the boathouse of the Stars, for he pointed at it, and it was in plain sight not far away. A little later Tom Porter rode away from the riverside hostelry.

The next morning dawned clear and pleasant, and as he jumped out of bed and saw the blue sky through the window, Jack uttered a delighted exclamation, for he concluded there was to be fine weather for the great boat race at Ashford that day. He ate an early breakfast, and then set out for the clubhouse. But he had not gone far when he heard news that startled and excited the whole town more than any event had done in years. This news was nothing less than the astonishing information that during the night the Ashford Bank had been robbed of sixty odd thousand dollars, that the bank itself and the safe had been opened evidently by someone who had a key to the street door, and knew the combination of the safe lock, for the robbers had not used violence to get into the bank or open the safe.

The person who told Jack all this was a policeman of the town. He said he had just come from the robbed bank, and that he had there learned that Roy Clayton had recently been entrusted with the bank keys and the combination of the safe. In conclusion he added:

"And it seems a sure thing that the young clerk did the job, for he has absconded and his folks say he was not at home at all last night."

"I don't believe Roy Clayton did it!" exclaimed Jack, and as he thought how badly Mattie must feel over her brother's disgrace he proceeded directly to her home. He found the young girl and her widowed mother in tears. Mattie and Roy were the poor woman's only children, and her son was her hope and stay. She would not believe that he was guilty, and Mattie was equally confident of his innocence. But both were sorely alarmed because of his unexplained absence, as he had never before left them alone at night without telling them of his plans for the evening.

Jack consoled the mother and daughter as best he could and he finally left them somewhat reassured.

That all eventful day of the great boat race was a busy one for Jack. He saw that his beloved racing shell was carefully packed on a train, and Dick Brent rode in the car with it as guard. At nine o'clock the Stars' racing crew took the train for Brookdale. As soon as the Stars arrived at their destination they took their shell out of the freight car and it was conveyed to the water's edge. There it was set bottom up on sawhorses and Jack went over it, touching up the seams here and there and readjusting the outriggers and all the parts with a keen eye that nothing escaped. After that the boat was launched, and the crew took a trial spin over the course and back. The bracing air seemed to invigorate the rowers, and Jack saw that all were fit and physically up to the mark.

After they came back from the trial of the course, the Stars' crew had a good lunch served at a waterside hotel, then they had a fast walk, finally returning to their quarters to rest. The banks of the river were lined by dense crowds, and innumerable river craft, laden with spectators, sought out the best position for viewing the race. At last the judges' boat had taken its place, and everything was in readiness for the contest when the Brookdale crew appeared coming up from their boathouse and bearing their shell, which they launched, and rowed into position with a fine showing of skill and confidence. They were greeted by a perfect storm of cheers. But when the Stars' crew rowed to the starting point, because the Ashford contingent in the crowd was comparatively small, the cheering was but faint.

In a moment, while a deep hush fell, the men of both crews sat bent forward like drawn bows, waiting for the signal to start. Soon it came in the shape of a single pistol-shot discharged from the judge's boat. Instantly the men of both crews lifted themselves from the sliding seats and flung their bodies backward as they pulled the oars, and the two shells seemed to be fairly lifted out of the water. Jack's men swung at the oars as smoothly and regularly as if each was but a part of one great perfect machine. They settled down to a fast-stroke, but which was not anything like the limit of their possible speed, and the Brookdale crew soon led them by a length. Jack presently made the stroke thirty-six to the minute, and the oars fell into the water as one. The Stars made no effort to gain, but they did not allow their rivals to increase their lead. The Brookdale crew worked like beavers in their efforts to shake off their dogged followers, who hung to them steadily. In spite of all they could do they were unable to draw ahead further. At length, when Jack had pretty well sized up his opponents, he gave a sign to his little coxswain, and the stroke was quickened.

But just then the shells were in a lonely part of the river, a dense woods lining one side. Suddenly three half-naked young fellows rushed out of the bushes, followed by another boy and plunging in the water, began swimming and playing pranks on each other. There was a long tree trunk floating in the stream and the boy who stood in the shallow water raised his fist and cried:

"Now!"

At the word of command the three swimmers pushed the floating tree trunk in front of Jack Fair's shell. But Jack saw them in time. He ordered his coxswain to swing the shell to the right, and it went around just in time to avoid hitting the log. The four young miscreants now hurried ashore and disappeared among the trees.

"I'll bet that was some of Tom Porter's work," muttered Jack, and his guess was right.

But the plot was a failure. The shell rounded the end of the tree trunk and, speeding on under quickened strokes, drew near Porter's boat again. Brookdale then spurted bravely, but they had worked too hard at the start, and they could not keep the pace, and the Stars came along their side. Then slowly, steadily they gained until they went by Brookdale—first an inch, then a foot, and presently a boat's length. The Brookdales spurted and spurted, but all in vain, until they began to row out of time and had to slow up. Then the Stars increased their lead by three boats' lengths, and presently, as their friends cheered themselves hoarse, the flags told them they were nearing home. Now the Brookdales had regained the stroke, and were coming on furiously. Suddenly, then, with a snap and a crash, Jack's good spruce oar broke in his hand, just at the moment when victory seemed assured. As he ceased rowing the rest of the crew began to slow up, and Brookdale gained rapidly.

CHAPTER IV.—Winning Against Odds.

For the moment the Stars' crew was disconcerted by the breaking of Jack's oar, and the spectators on the river banks and upon the numerous craft thought that now surely the race was lost by the crew from Ashford. The people who had come from that town to cheer and encourage their crew were chagrined and disappointed, and there was a moment of intense suspense for them, as they eagerly watched to see what their favorite crew would do now that their stroke had lost his oar. As for Jack, he was in despair at heart, though he made an effort not to show it. He thought of the wager which he had made with Tom Porter, who, by the way, was the stroke and captain of the Brookdale crew, and he felt that he had not the courage to face his father if he lost the money which the latter had entrusted to his care. But for all his despair, Jack was desperate, and he did not mean that his crew should give up the race as long as they had a single fighting chance.

"Hit her up, fellows! Now for the spurt of your lives!" he cried, as in obedience to his previous order the crew took the stroke from number one in the bow.

And motionless, pale as death, with eyes set and nerves tense, the champion sat there, unable to lend a hand while his brave crew bent to the oars and ran up the stroke in a way that amazed the spectators and awakened their unbounded admiration. But now it was a race of seven men against eight, and the unequal numbers must surely tell against the Stars. Tom Porter, in the Brookdale shell, had witnessed the "accident" which befell Jack with evident delight, and he shouted to his men:

"We'll win now! The Star's stroke is out! Whoop her up for all you're worth, fellows."

The Brookdale men responded to Porter's order with a burst of speed which told how much they were encouraged, and then there began one of the most desperate and interesting contests ever witnessed on the famous river course. It was now mainly a question of distance and time, and Jack and his comrades rejoiced that they were now so near home, and determined to fight the battle as long as they had strength to pull the oars. The Brookdales only succeeded in just gaining a length on the Stars, and now the latter crew went to work like Trojans. On, on sped the rival shells, until the bow of the Stars came even with the stern of the Brookdales, and then the former moved forward, inch by inch.

Tom Porter now called out to his men, urging, imploring and commanding them not to let the Stars pass, and close ahead he saw the line. The finish was almost at hand. Now was the tug-of-war. Everything depended upon the speed and endurance of the men for a few moments more. One, two, three minutes passed, and then the spectators saw the bow of the Star's boat ahead of Brookdale. A great cheer greeted the discovery. The leaders bent to the oars like demons for one last effort, and their shell answered in leaps like a thing of life. The rowers' teeth are clenched as they pry upon the water. Then at last, with one tremendous heave, into which each man puts every atom of his remaining strength, they lift their shell across the line and the Stars have won the great race by half a length. Not a man of the winning crew was able to stand for some moments when the shore was reached, but the stimulation of victory was potent with all, and they were soon able to walk. But that they were not permitted to do. Their friends and admirers, quite wild with enthusiasm, lifted each man upon their shoulders, and bore them in triumph to their quarters. A couple of hours later, when all hands had been rubbed down and were somewhat refreshed and attired in their street clothes, Jack called them into his room at the hotel.

"Boys," said he, when the door was locked, "I told you on the river, when my oar broke in my hands, that there had been foul play, and that is the truth. Here is my broken oar, examine it for yourselves."

He passed the two pieces of the oar to Dick Brent, and all present gathered around him as he inspected it.

"Foul play? Well, I should say so! Look here, fellows! The oar was clearly sawed almost through at the place where it broke. But I'll take my oath no one got it after we left Ashford," exclaimed the croaker, at once.

"Strange that you didn't notice it before it broke."

"I looked at the oar casually when I took my place in the shell," said Jack, "but I did not detect that it had been tampered with. If you will look closely you will see there is a little wax at the edge of the break. I conclude that the sawed place was carefully filled with wax, and stained over so that one could not easily detect the crack."

"That's it! See, here is a little of the wax!" cried the croaker, and he held up one part of the oar.

"Who could have done it? Tom Porter had a hundred dollars up on the race, and that, to-

gether with the championship of the league at stake, may have prompted him," said Ned Dudley.

CHAPTER V.—After the Great Boat Race.

"I know that Tom Porter's reputation does not place him above suspicion in this matter, but I don't like to think that he could be guilty of such unsportsmanlike conduct, downright villainy, indeed, and so we will not accuse him, or anyone, until we have some proof of the culprit's identity," said Jack.

"Have you seen Porter since the race?" asked Jay Bird.

"No," replied Jack.

"Well, as stakeholder, now that the race is over and we have won, I'm ready to pay over the money you and Porter put up," said Jay Bird.

"Just then there came a rap at the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Jack.

"Tom Porter," was the answer.

Jack unlocked and opened the door. The captain of the defeated crew entered, looking decidedly crestfallen.

"I've come to see the bet I made with you settled, and also to have a few words with you in private, Mr. Fair," said he stiffly, as he eyed Jack in an unfriendly manner.

"All right," replied the lad addressed. "I wonder if you've got anything to say about the way my oar was fixed to break, by some rascal who got it before the race?"

"What do you mean? I know nothing about what you are talking of. Don't make insolent insinuations."

"Oh, no; certainly not," said Jack, laughing, but not very pleasantly.

"Jack has won the bet; you admit that?" said Jay Bird.

"Certainly," assented Porter.

"Then I give him the money," and Jay Bird handed Jack the two hundred dollars.

"That's all right," said Porter. "Now, Mr. Fair, I'll say something for your private ear, if you please."

"Very well. But for my part I'm perfectly willing that all present should hear anything that you may have to say to me."

"All right. But bear in mind this publicity is of your own seeking. The fact is, I have come to the decision to give you warning that I won't allow you to cut me out in a certain quarter. I need mention no name. You must understand that I refer to a certain young lady."

"Quite so," assented Jack, as cool as an iceberg. "Go on, please. You amuse me."

"I'm serious in this matter, and if you don't heed my warning you and I will have trouble and I'll call you out. You'll have to fight for the girl. We have a manly way of settling such matters in Brookdale Academy—that is, with our fists. Good-day, sir!" said Porter arrogantly.

He turned to go, but Jack said quickly:

"Though I know you are the champion boxer of the Tri-State Athletic League, and I have not given much attention to boxing, being more interested in rowing, baseball and other sports, you can't overawe me a little bit, and as for your warning, as you call it, I care for it just as much

as I do for you, and that's nothing," and snapping his fingers in Porter's face, Jack turned on his heel.

"You'll sing a different tune if you don't heed what I've said," retorted Porter, as he stalked out of the room.

"All aboard for Ashford!" sang out a porter outside the door a moment later, and the victorious crew hastened to the waiting vehicle which was to take them to the depot where they boarded the train for Ashford.

And what a rousing reception awaited them. The old academy town went wild. The academy students built great bonfires and cheered and howled the Ashford school yell until long after midnight. They were lionized, feasted and made much of in a way that was calculated to turn the heads of less well-balanced lads. Jack went to call on Mattie Clayton that night, though he had hard work to get away from his enthusiastic friends. Mattie informed Jack that no news of her missing brother had been received, and she said that her mother and herself had about settled down to the conviction that Roy had met with foul play at the hands of the bank robbers.

"Your father is one of the directors of the bank, and I presume he will be a heavy loser if the stolen money is not recovered. Oh, I do hope he will not believe that my poor brother is guilty."

"I share your hope in that respect, Mattie, for my father is a hard man, though he means to be just. He has no pity for anyone who is dishonest, and he distrusts almost everyone," answered Jack.

He and the young girl conversed for some time, and at last Mattie said, blushing charmingly:

"I have sometimes fancied you wanted me to think you cared a good deal for me, so do not think me over-bold, but I want to ask you if I am right, to prove it by doing me a great service now. Oh, Jack, promise me that you will try to find my missing brother. Do this if you really care for me, and once Roy is found I am sure he will explain everything about the bank robbery in a way to clear himself from all suspicion."

Of course Jack promised as she requested, and he was perfectly sincere when he assured her that he would do anything in the world for her dear sake. After he left Mattie he went to the new clubhouse of the athletes of the academy, and on the way he happened to meet the chief of the local police, who told him that everything continued to indicate that Roy Clayton had stolen the money from the bank and fled with it. He stated that no strangers had been seen about the town, and expressed the hope that as he had sent out a description of Roy Clayton by telegraph in every direction, the young fugitive, as he chose to designate him, might soon be arrested. The officer passed on.

Then a thought flashed upon Jack's mind which had not occurred to him previously, as he recollected the two ruffianly strangers whom he had encountered on Indian Island the preceding afternoon, not many hours before the robbery of the bank last night. Then it occurred to him that he ought to inform the chief of police of his suspicions, and he ran after that worthy, who came to a halt as he heard the lad calling to him.

"It's a pity you didn't tell of this before. It's quite likely the chaps who tried to hold you up on the island may have been in the bank job with

young Clayton. But there's hardly any doubt that they have made tracks out of these parts by this time. However, I'll go over to the island with some of my men without delay. Meanwhile, I wish you would not mention the strangers to anyone else," said the officer, when Jack had told him about his adventure on the island.

"I'll keep still about them as you say," assented the lad.

The next day he learned from the chief that he and his men had carefully searched Indian Island for the strangers, but that they had failed to find any trace of them. The chief also told Jack that old Huxley, the hermit owner of the island, had been questioned with the result that the recluse declared he had seen no strangers on the island recently. That afternoon Jack's father arrived at home, and the first thing he did was to ask the lad if he had paid Huxley. Of course, Jack explained why he had not done so and he rejoiced because he was able to hand his father back the two hundred dollars. He mentally vowed that nothing should ever tempt him to stake another person's money again, and the cold chills of fear ran up and down his back as he recalled how near he had come to losing the boat race. As may be supposed Mr. Fair had heard the news of the bank robbery and all the particulars about it before he reached home. Speaking of the matter to Jack, he said:

"I've lost twenty thousand dollars by the robbery. But I'll spend as much more trying to catch that ungrateful rascal, Roy Clayton. I'm satisfied that he is guilty, and I want to tell you now that I won't allow a son of mine to associate with any member of the family of a thief."

CHAPTER VI.—Jack Goes to the Picnic After All.

Jack flushed as his father last spoke. He supposed that his parent meant that he should accept his words as a positive command that he should not pay Miss Mattie any further attentions.

"Father," said he, "I am sure you will not condemn Roy unheard. With all due respect for your opinion in the matter, I must say that I have faith in his honesty yet, and even if it should turn out that I am wrong, and he is proven to be guilty, I don't think it's fair for you to blame the other members of the Clayton family."

"Look here, Jack, I know all about your fancy for that rascally clerk's sister, and that's why I said I would not have you associating with anyone of his family. What! Do you think I'd allow you to devote yourself to a girl whose brother—whose crime has almost ruined me! Twenty thousand in hard cash was my balance at the bank. I depended on that money to meet certain obligations this month, and if I cannot borrow the money my credit is ruined, and it's likely I'll go into the hands of a receiver before the end of the year. Now, don't let me hear of your having anything more to do with that girl. There's Polly Smith, the big mill owner's daughter, and an only child. Your mother says she likes you, and I don't object to her in the least."

"Nor to her prospective wealth, either," Jack blurted out, with a look of disgust, as he mentally

saw the fat, coarse and homely girl whom his father mentioned.

"Don't be insolent, sir! I won't have it!"

"Beg pardon, father, I did not mean anything disrespectful."

"I don't suppose you did. You are a pretty good boy, Jack, and I hope you will try to please me in this matter. But I want to be just, and if it should turn out that I'm wrong about young Clayton, I shall withdraw my objections to his sister. That's the last thing that's likely to happen, though."

Then Mr. Fair put on his hat and set out for his office. The summer vacation had come and the Star Athletic Club had planned to have a picnic on Indian Island. It was to that outing that Mattie had alluded in her note. Since Jack's club had won the boat race the young lady was released from her engagement to go with Tom Porter, and Jack was in a dilemma, as he reflected that she wanted to go with him, and it was his most ardent desire to act as her escort.

"It's too bad. How unreasonable the governor is! Since he has forbidden me to pay Mattie any attention, I can't take her to the picnic."

Jack cogitated the matter for some time, and the result was that he wrote a note to Mattie, saying that he found he could not attend the picnic. When the young lady received it she was talking with her mother about the picnic, and she had said that, because of the supposed disgrace that had fallen upon her brother, she did not feel like attending it. But Mrs. Clayton said she thought it best that Mattie should go. Of course Mattie decided to heed her mother's advice, but when she read Jack's note she was not a little surprised and disappointed, and she began to suspect something of the true reason why he would not attend the picnic.

This caused her to feel piqued and hurt, and on the day after the morrow which was the date set for the picnic, when Tom Porter called to say that though he had lost the boat race he came to ask Mattie to go with him, anyhow, she consented. That morning the Stars had received a challenge from the Brookdale club, which was composed of members of the rival athletic club, and Jack, as captain of the Star's nine, had accepted it. So, instead of going to the picnic he went out to look after the men who were cleaning up the athletic field, attached to the Star's new clubhouse, in which their ball ground was situated, for the game was to be played there on Saturday, and it was now Thursday. But all the time Jack bitterly regretted that he felt obliged not to take Mattie to the picnic. While he was at the ball grounds, his father came there and said:

"As Huxley has not come around for his money, I want you to go over to the island this afternoon and pay him."

So it came about that not long after the little lake steamer had taken the picnic party over to the Island Jack rowed across to it, and landed at Huxley's pier. He found the recluse at home and paid him. As he was leaving the house of the recluse, Jack heard the music of the string band that was just then playing for the dancers at the picnic grounds only a short distance away in the beautiful grove. So he stealthily approached the grounds. Presently, from behind a tree he looked forward and saw the gay throng. A large dancing floor had been built in an open space between the

great trees, and among the dancers upon it he saw Mattie and Tom Porter. Meantime, Dick Brent and Ned Dudley, who had been wondering why Jack had not come to the picnic, and above all why he and not Porter had not brought Mattie there, had gone to the spring to get water for the lemonade. As they were coming back they espied Jack behind the tree. The two lads thought it would be a lark to surprise Jack, and so they put down the bucket which they carried between them, and stealing up suddenly fell upon him, and dragged him out in full view of everybody, Dick shouting:

"Here's Jack! The rascal was hiding and up to some trick on us, you bet!"

Jack was much put out, but there was nothing for it but to put the best possible face on the situation, so he forced a laugh and admitted that he had come, bent upon some mischief. He knew he ought to go away, but he didn't. And as mindful of his father's commands, he avoided Mattie and permitted Tom Porter to have the young lady all to himself, his conduct exciting much comment. Mattie herself looked indifferent, but she was more piqued than ever, for had he not written her that he could not be present at the picnic.

Ere long Jack became aware that his boy comrades were whispering that he was acting as if he was afraid of Porter; as if he was obeying the rival champion's order not to show Miss Mattie any further attentions. At that Jack's indignation blazed up, and for the moment he was ready to do anything to show that he was not a coward, and that he was not afraid of Porter. Forgotten were all his good resolutions to obey the injunctions of his father, and he walked right up to Mattie and Porter as they left the dancing floor, and asked the young lady to dance the next set with him.

Now Mattie had resolved to snub him, but she liked him very much, and in a moment, true to the traditions of her sex, she changed her mind, beginning to think he might have had good reason to suppose he could not attend the picnic when he wrote her to that effect. So she excused herself to Porter and took Jack's arm. Presently the music struck up, and the young couple joined in the dance. Then Jack explained that he had really thought he should not attend the outing, but that circumstances had changed at the last moment so that he was able to come. After the dance ended Jack left Mattie for a moment as Dick Brent called to him.

"Jack," said the croaker, as the former joined him, "Tom Porter has challenged you to go over to 'Fighter's Glade,' right now, and have it out with him about Miss Mattie with your fists, but as he is the champion boxer of the league you stand no chance with him in a fight according to ring rules."

CHAPTER VII.—A Fight Stopped—A Challenge Accepted.

Jack Fair was quite surprised at the croaker's announcement of Tom Porter's challenge at that time, for he did not think that the champion of the rival athletic club would have the bad taste, not to say insolence, to seek a fight at the picnic, at which he was an invited guest of the Star Club. To Brent he said:

"Tom Porter knows that as far as skill and science goes he is vastly my superior in the art of boxing, and if he had any spirit of fairness he would not insist on a fight according to rules. Say, Croaker, I want you to ask him to consent to fight rough and tumble, then we will be equally matched."

"All right, Jack. But I must say Porter has a good deal of cheek and impudence to mar the pleasure of the picnic in this way, when he is our guest," answered the other.

But none of them seemed to know how Jack could avoid a fight, and presently he and a dozen other members of his club were on their way to "Fighter's Glade." When Jack and his companions arrived at the glade they found that Tom Porter and a number of his club members who, like himself, were the guests of the Star Club, were already on the ground. And, at a glance, Jack observed that his rival's chosen companions were all fellows who had an unenviable reputation for ruffianly conduct in athletic games.

"Mr. Porter," said Dick Brent, with great dignity, "in behalf of my principal, Jack Fair, I wish to say that inasmuch as, while you are the champion boxer of our Tri-State League, and he is not a boxer at all, we regard your challenge as unfair, because it does not give both parties an equal chance—you have every advantage of skill and training. Therefore, in justice to Jack, you should consent to a rough and tumble fight, and I ask you to do so."

Porter, who pretended to be a great stickler for etiquette in such matters as this, turned and whispered to one of his party, who thereupon replied:

"My principal declines to modify the terms of his challenge, and your man must fight or show the white feather."

Meantime, out of earshot of Jack, his companions had been whispering together earnestly, and big, burly Alexander Nailor, otherwise "Nails," in a moment of mental illumination, had offered a suggestion which was received with unanimous approval. But Jack, as he heard Porter's second refuse to accede to Brent's request, stripped off his coat and vest, looking fully determined to fight as Porter proposed, let the consequences be what they might. Just then "Nails" stepped forward.

"One moment, gentlemen," said he, raising his hand.

"What now?" growled Porter, "no more crawling, I hope?"

"I am the president of the committee of arrangements, and manager of this picnic. I have decided that this is not a proper time or place for a fight. Such a contest as is proposed would bring disgrace upon our club if carried out at an intended to be pleasant social function at which ladies are present, and who are liable to appear upon the scene here at any moment. The floor managers of our club agree with me, and they will see that there is no fight. Gentlemen, we will now return to the picnic grounds."

"One moment," said Jack, putting on his coat. "Just to show that I'm not afraid of a fair fight, I offer to meet Tom Porter in a fight to a finish, under the usual rules, one month from today. That will give us time to practice up a little on boxing."

"Done!" cried Porter. "I accept your challenge,

and I call on all present to bear witness of the fact!"

With that he, too, put on his coat, and as Jack and his comrades hastened back to the picnic grounds, Porter and his friends followed. Upon his return Jack devoted himself to Miss Mattie, and although, of course, she had to allow Tom Porter to take her home, since she had accepted his escort to the island, Jack had the pleasure of knowing that she would have much preferred his company. Just before the party set out to go aboard the excursion steamer that was to take them home, Mattie said to Jack:

"I hope you have not forgotten your promise to try and find my brother Roy?"

"Certainly I have not. But what can a fellow like me do, when all the police cannot find out what has become of him? I fear, if you count upon me much, you will only be disappointed," answered Jack.

Then he remembered that he had not told her about the strange men whom he had encountered on the island the day preceding the night of the bank robbery. And as he knew he could trust her, he related all about those ruffians.

"Oh, Jack!" exclaimed Mattie, "I feel sure those men were the bank robbers. Something seems to tell me so. You say the police searched the island for them, but in vain. But, Jack, there must be numerous hiding places on it, and maybe the robbers are hidden here yet, knowing that the surrounding country was aroused and on the lookout for suspicious strangers, the rascals may have concluded it was best to remain secreted here. Why don't you search the island?"

"By George, I will! I know the great woods that covers most of it well, for I have hunted all through it scores of times. And, then, you know, our club camps out on the island every summer, and it's like home to me, almost," said Jack.

On the way home he thought a good deal about Mattie's suggestion, and he spoke of the matter to Dick Brent.

"All right," said Dick, "I'll go on the hunt for the robbers with you at any time."

"Let's go tomorrow, then."

"All right. But I say, Jack, you don't want to lose any time about getting into training for your ring fight with Porter. Four weeks is a mighty short time to get up on the art of boxing well enough to make a good showing against a champion."

"Well, Dick, it's too late for regrets now. And if I can't beat Porter, at least I'll have some sort of a chance. I couldn't bear to keep still under his taunts. I'm going to put myself in the hands of Bat Donnelly, the retired prize fighter, who is the boxing instructor of our club."

So that evening Jack went up to the new clubhouse, in which the gymnasium of the Star Club was now situated. There he found Bat Donnelly, the ex-pugilist, who was putting a number of the members of his boxing class through their exercises. Jack presently found a chance to speak to the veteran of the squared circle aside. But before he could say a word the boxing master grasped him by the hand, saying heartily:

"I've heard all about it, that you're in for a mill in a month's time. I thought you'd come to it some time, and I want to say right now that I'll take you in hand and make you as fit as a man

can make you in a limited time, if you say the word."

"Thank you. Suppose I put on the mitts right now?" said Jack.

"That's the talk," assented the boxing master, and a few moments later he and Jack were sparring on the sanded floor, and the ex-pugilist gave the lad many friendly tips on the art of self-defense and fistic attack. Jack was as quick as a cat, and his instructor was delighted with him.

CHAPTER VIII.—Jack and Dick Make a Discovery.

In the morning Jack and Dick Brent set out for Indian Island, where they meant to make the search for the mysterious strangers, as Mattie had suggested to the former. They were going along the street toward the lake when they saw an intoxicated man lurching along the sidewalk, as he approached them.

"Hello! There's Nick Price, the hostler of Indian Island Hotel, as drunk as a lord!" exclaimed Dick.

"That's so. Nick must have got some money some way. You know he always gets drunk when he has the price. If it had not been for that I should not have discharged him. But we couldn't trust him to take care of our boathouse, and shells," said Jack.

"No, and Nick was very mad at you when you gave him the bounce."

"I know, and since I discharged him, we haven't employed anyone in his place, but looked after the boats ourselves."

Just then the two lads came face to face with Nick Price.

"Hello, you young bloods! Yer thought Nick Price couldn't live if you give him the sack, didn't yer. Well, he kin, an' don't you forgit it. Look at the long green. There's more where that come from. But—hic—you did win the race after all!" cried the drunken fellow, flourishing a few bank notes.

Jack gave a start as he heard Nick's last indiscreet words.

"When the wine is in the wit is out, you know. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that Nick Price is the man who fixed my oar. He may easily have had a duplicate key to the boathouse. Tom Porter probably bribed him," whispered Jack.

Then to Nick:

"I'll wager Tom Porter won't give you another cent!"

"Yes, he will, too—I mean he ain't got nothing to do with it," answered the hostler, surprised into an admission which he instantly repented, and tried to recall.

"I was right, and some day Nick Price may be forced to testify against Tom Porter," said Jack, as they walked on.

They rowed over to the island without delay, but as the wind was coming strongly from the north they did not try to make Huxley's landing, but gained the shore at a point south of the pier of the old recluse. Having secured the boat they held a consultation, and Jack said:

"Let's go up to Huxley's house. He's an honest old chap, I believe, and I'll question him about the strangers on the chance that he may have

found out something about them since the police visited him."

They had reached the door, and Jack was just about to knock when he heard the sound of men's voices from within. He knew Huxley's voice well, and so he was sure that the recluse was one of the speakers. The voice of the other man startled Jack, for the instant that he caught the sound of it he thought he recognized it as the voice of one of the strangers whom he had encountered on the island, and whom he and Dick had come to search for. It flashed through Jack's mind that it would be a good idea to listen and try to find out what was the subject of the conversation between the hermit and his companion, but as chance would have it, as Dick moved to his side he knocked down a fishpole that stood beside the door. As it struck the steps before the door with a loud noise, Jack heard hasty movements inside, and knowing that now he could not listen undiscovered, he knocked upon the portal. After a moment's delay old Huxley opened the door, and recognizing Jack, asked him to come in, and his manner was cordial and unconcerned. Jack passed into the log house and Dick followed. The boys saw no one in the hut but Huxley. Jack remarked carelessly:

"We came over to gather up some of the things that were left behind by our picnic party, and just dropped in to ask you to lend us an ax. We want to take down the refreshment booth; the lumber is only rented, and we've got to return it."

"All right. You'll find an ax in the woodshed outside, and you're welcome to it. I'm glad you called, for it's very seldom that anyone visits me. There hasn't been a living soul here for weeks, except when you called to pay me that money yesterday," replied the hermit.

Jack and Brent went out to the woodshed and, having secured the ax, which he found where he had been directed to look for it, Jack led the way into the adjacent woods, and the croaker followed. Inside the woods line the lads paused where a clump of bushes served to shield them from the sight of anyone at Huxley's dwelling.

"It's our game to watch the house. As we are certain that one of the men we are after is in it, we may take it for granted that he will come forth by and by," said Jack.

The two lads crouched side by side, and peering through the bushes watched the hermit's dwelling attentively, the while they continued conversing almost in whispers.

"I'll bet those chaps who robbed the bank made straight for the island after the job was done," said Dick.

"No doubt, and it's reasonable to suppose that they brought their plunder here, and, of course, they know what has become of Roy Clayton," replied Jack.

"Great Scott, Jack! It's ten to one that the robbers have hidden all the money they stole from the bank somewhere on the island."

"That's my opinion, and maybe you and I are the ones who are destined to find it."

"And solve the mystery of Roy Clayton's strange disappearance, eh?" said Dick.

"I only hope it may turn out so, but we are undertaking a mighty dangerous job in trying to find out the truth. However, I do not mean to be deterred by the danger. But—ah—there he is now. The fellow is one of the men who tried to

rob me here on the island!" said Jack, in an excited whisper.

At that moment the man whom the lad positively recognized came out of the hermit's house. He was accompanied by Huxley. The two men paused before the door and seemed to exchange a few words, which the concealed boys were unable to overhear, however. Then the stranger walked straight toward the woods, taking a course which threatened to bring him directly to the bushes behind which crouched the youthful comrades. The stranger passed close by their cover without detecting their presence, it appeared, and when he had gone the lads arose, and proceeded to follow him stealthily. In a moment or so they caught sight of his receding figure among the trees, and still undetected they continued to trail him until among the wooded hills that traversed the island from north to south, they suddenly lost sight of him. After that they cautiously explored the neighborhood for hours, but they did not again set eyes on the stranger. Finally, as night was coming on, the disappointed boys took their way back to Huxley's house, and having returned his ax they left the island.

CHAPTER IX.—The Championship Baseball Game.

When they reached town the lads met a paper boy who was crying the Evening Gazette, a leading local newspaper.

"Evenin' Gusset! All about the big reward offered for the robbers!" shouted the lad.

"Hello! That's something we're interested in," said Jack, and he stopped the newsboy and bought a paper.

"Here it is—the reward notice. Just listen!" he added, opening the paper. "Ten thousand dollars reward for the arrest of the robbers of the Ashford Bank, and the return of the stolen money."

"Great Scott! And wouldn't we be the real thing if we could cause the robbers to be taken with their plunder? You're right, Jack; we'll keep mum and go in for that reward on our own account," said Dick.

"We can't do anything more in that direction at present, though, for tomorrow morning we have got to get out with our nine and practice for the championship game we have to play with Brookdale in the afternoon on our own grounds," replied Jack.

The Stars had an excellent, inclosed baseball ground, which was of course a part of the athletic field attached to their new clubhouse. Saturday was a fine day, and long before four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the game was to be called, the grand stand was well filled and the "bleachers" were crowded with men and boys. There were many ladies in the grand stand, and among them the young girls of the town were well represented. There was an unusual degree of public interest in the coming game between the Stars of Ashford and the Brookdale Nine, because the two clubs were now tied for first place in the series of Tri-State League games that had already been played this season.

The game today would decide which club was to take first place. The Brookdale Club came into

the field at half after three, led by Tom Porter, their captain, and clad in brand new white and blue uniforms. They were certainly a fine athletic-looking nine, and they were cheered lustily, for of course Brookdale was well represented in the audience, and the people from that town meant to root for their home team the best they knew how. The Stars came on the grounds a little later while the Brookdales were practicing to get limbered up, and also to acquire a knowledge of the grounds. Though the Stars did not wear new uniforms they received an ovation from the crowd, and each member of the nine was inspired to do great things, particularly as they knew their "best girls" were in the grand stand.

Jack saw Mattie there with a group of young girls, and he doffed his cap to her as he passed on his way to the field. The umpire called the game, and the play began. Jack stood outside the line, between the plate and first base, to act as coach. The game was hotly contested from the very start and at the end of the seventh inning the score stood: Stars, 4; Brookdales, 5. There had been many fine plays made up to this point, and the enthusiasm of the people seated in the grand stand and bleachers was roused to a high pitch, as was proved by their loud cheers and clapping of hands. The eighth inning resulted in the Brookdales scoring another run, and the Star contingent was pretty well discouraged.

The Brookdale contingent among the audience now went wild with delight, and the friends of the Stars were pretty downhearted. Jack knew that a game was never lost until it was won, and so, with only one inning to do it in, he did not despair, for he was always a hopeful chap. The Stars went to the bat for the ninth inning, and they had bad luck at first. Two men were put out in one, two order. Then Nails made a base hit, Brent did the same, and little Ned Dudley made a home run hit. Thus three runs were scored by the Stars. The score stood 7 to 6 in favor of the Stars. But the Brookdales yet had to have their chance at the bat for the last half of the ninth, and if they got in a single run they would tie the score, and of course if they made two runs they would win. The critical moment of the game had almost come.

CHAPTER X.—The Catch That Ended the Ball Game.

The crowd became almost silent because of intense interest as the Stars took the field. Jack paused on his way to his position on first base to whisper a few words to Nails, the pitcher. The latter was considered one of the best pitchers in the Tri-State League, and his work in the present championship game had been fine enough to further augment his reputation as a professional twirler of the elusive white sphere, as the Brookdales had to admit. When he had whispered to Nails, Jack advised him to "give the Brookdales all the tricks he had up his sleeve," without delay. Nails nodded assent and as soon as the field was in position the umpire called "striker up!" A short, powerful-looking chap, who was one of the heaviest and most reliable batters in the Brookdale nine, swaggered up to the plate, coolly dusted it off and tapped it with his bat, as he glanced

around at the crowd confidently, as much as to say, "Just see me do it."

Nails braced himself for the first pitch, and went through a series of gyrations that seemed to indicate he was about to deliver the ball with tremendous speed. But when it came it was a slow drop, and the striker delivered his blow too swiftly.

"One strike!" cried the umpire.

The next ball came over the plate fairly, but at almost lightning speed. That time the striker was too slow, and strike two was called on him. Croaker, the catcher, slipped on his mask, and got up close under the striker's bat. At the next pitch the striker gave the ball a foul tip and the croaker ticked it almost off his bat.

"Striker out!" shouted the umpire, and Jack and his men took heart. The next man to the plate made a base hit, and so did the next. The fourth man was put out on a fly, which Ned Dudley, the shortstop, took hot from the bat. The next batter was Tom Porter, who really was the surest batter in the Brookdale nine.

Porter took his time, and being a little afraid of his skill, Nails did not give him good balls. The umpire had called two balls and two strikes, when Porter found the leather on an upshoot, and sent the ball into right field for a safe base hit. Now, with two men out and three men on bases, a very good batter of the Brookdales came to the bat. He hit the first ball and made for first. The ball sailed away as a fly, between first and second bases, and Jack ran for it at full speed. It seemed, however, that he could not get under it in time, but he did. As he made that splendid running catch, and so won the game, the people on the grand stand and the occupants of the other seats rose en masse, and cheered him to the echo.

Jack modestly doffed his cap. But just then he had eyes for no one save pretty Mattie Clayton, whom he caught sight of as she clapped her little hands until she split her gloves. The triumph of the Stars was a great source of satisfaction to the townspeople, as well as to the players themselves, and that night the new clubhouse was dedicated and the opening hop came off. Of course, the defeated Brookdales were invited, and the Stars treated their vanquished adversaries royally. Jack attended the hop, as a matter of course. But, out of respect to his father's commands, he did not take Mattie. As he was aware that she expected him to do so, he finally made up his mind that in justice to himself, he ought to tell the young lady why he could not act as her escort. So, before the hour when the hop was to commence, he called at the Clayton house, and saw Mattie alone. Then, like the honest lad that he was, he frankly informed her of his father's views, but he asked Mattie not to think too hardly of his parent, and to believe that it was the greatest trial he had known to obey his commands.

Being a sensible girl, although she could not but resent Mr. Fair's condemnation of her brother, Mattie said that Jack was right in obeying his father, and that she did not think the less of him on that account. And, at first, she said she would not attend the hop. But Jack persuaded her to go with a friend of his, and she made him quite happy by saying that she would not accept the attentions of his rival.

That night the Stars' new clubhouse was brilliantly illuminated, as befitted the grand opening,

and colored lanterns were festooned over the arched entrance and along the front. It stood at the corner of a great, square field, that had been leveled, rolled and mapped out for outdoor games. The band was playing one of Sousa's grand marches when Mattie entered the dancing hall, accompanied by her escort, Jack's friend. Jack was already there, and most of the guests had assembled. Everything went on pleasantly until quite late in the evening, though Jack, who kept away from Mattie, observed that Tom Porter frequently approached her, but she did not once dance with him, and the captain of the Stars at least had the satisfaction of seeing that Porter looked very much put out.

Jack was passing by Mattie and her escort as they were resting between the dances when Porter came up, and, bowing to the young lady, asked her to give him the next dance—a waltz. Mattie politely declined. Porter's anger seemed to flame up beyond control, and he blurted out:

"You have refused to dance with me, though I have asked you several times, and I know your card was not filled. I don't know why you object to me, and you need not give yourself airs. I don't suppose I ought to be particularly anxious to dance with the sister of a thief!"

Mattie turned pale and indignation held her speechless. Jack forgot everything save that the young girl who was so dear to him had been unwarrantably insulted. Like a flash he reached Tom Porter's side and his hand fell upon his insolent rival's shoulder.

"Come outside, you cur!" he hissed.

Porter wheeled, threw off Jack's hand, and said with an ugly look:

"That would just suit me, only I know if I go out with you now our match for a bout a month hence will be off. You know as well as I do that if two men of our league are matched for a boxing contest, get into a row and exchange blows before they meet in the ring, according to our rules the match is off."

"Very well," Jack then replied. "But I'll remember this incident, Mr. Porter, and when we meet in the ring I hope to punish you as you deserve."

"I see you doing it. I'll lay you two to one that you don't last six rounds," sneered Porter.

But Jack turned on his heel and paid no attention to his remark. Just as the party was breaking up and everybody was going in the grand march, with which the entertainment concluded, Mattie came up to Jack and sweetly thanked him for promptly resenting the insolent remark which Porter had made to her. Then she bade him good-night, and he went home, happy in the thought that Porter's ungentlemanly conduct had recoiled upon himself, and confident that he need no longer regard him as a rival for the favors of the belle of Ashford.

Monday morning Jack went to the clubhouse and began his regular training under Bat Conroy's instructions. He punched the bag, boxed and played hand ball, and as the veteran boxer told him that a moderate amount of rowing and tramping about in the open air would do him good, in the afternoon he set out for Indian Island with the croaker, feeling that his quest for the bank robbers might be considered as training exercise.

The lads rowed toward the island leisurely, and

when they were yet at some distance off the southern end where they meant to land, hoping that Huxley might not see them, Jack caught sight of a man on the beach looking through a field-glass or small telescope. The man disappeared before Jack could make sure if he was one of the bank robbers, or who he was. But he was pretty well convinced that the fellow was one of the men he wanted to locate, and he gave the croaker his opinion on that head.

"Well, if that chap was one of the robbers, it isn't likely our quest of today will come to anything. The rascals will take care to keep in hiding," said the croaker.

The result proved the truth of this prophecy, for, having landed, the two lads searched about for the strangers until sunset, but they did not find any trace of the two men. Weary and discouraged, they rowed homeward. But Jack said:

"As it seems the rascals kept a sharp lookout to discover any one who approaches the island by day, I propose that we go over to it under the cover of darkness."

"All right. But I'm too tired to go tonight," said the croaker.

"So am I. But suppose we go tomorrow night?"

"Agreed," assented the other.

"We'll set out just after dark," said Jack.

CHAPTER XI.—The Night Visit to Indian Island.

Circumstances which Jack and the croaker could not foresee prevented the former from going to Indian Island the next night, and for a week the lads did nothing further in the way of searching the island for the men who were secreted there. One morning succeeding the day of their visit to the island of the recluse, Jack's father received a telegram calling him away to a distant city to attend to important business, which he said would keep him away for a week or ten days. And when he left he made Jack promise to stay at home nights to keep his mother company.

On the next Saturday afternoon Jack's father arrived at home, and that night, as soon as the darkness fell, the lad met Dick Brent at his father's dock by appointment and entering a small boat which belonged to Jack, the two lads rowed toward the Indian Island.

The side of the lake opposite the site of the town was wooded, and Jack knew that it was not likely, even if the strange men kept a lookout by night, that they would anticipate the coming of any one from the direction of the further shore. So he said to Dick:

"I propose that we row around the southern end of the island, keeping far enough away from the shore to avoid discovery by any one who may be on the lookout. Then we will make a landing on the other side of the island. Thus we may avoid detection if the robbers are on the watch on the town side of it."

"That's a good idea, Jack. We must not be discovered, for if the rascals found out that we had come over slyly by night, they would no doubt take it for granted that we suspected their presence and that we meant to spy upon them," rejoined the croaker.

After that the lads rowed onward steadily, until the dark outlines of the island began to loom through the misty shadows that darkened the now placid lake.

The long, narrow cape that formed the extremity of the water-guarded land lay almost directly due east.

Rounding the cape they rowed northward along the further shore, until they were at some distance off the central part of the coast.

The beach sloped gently down to the lake, ending in a long stretch of white sand, and it was an easy matter to make a landing.

Rowing inshore the lads grounded their boat, and presently leaped out and drew the small craft well up beyond the reach of the encroaching water.

For a moment or so they remained standing upon the beach beside their boat, looking about anxiously, and listening for any sound that might indicate human proximity.

But the beach was deserted, save for the presence of themselves, and the sounds which reached their hearing were easily accounted for, from natural causes which man had no part in.

And so reassured, the young athletes directed their steps across the beach, whilst they became aware that the night was slowly growing lighter. In truth, for some little time, the aspect of the sky had been undergoing a material change, as the earlier evening breeze increased in strength, and carried the overcasting clouds in dark and solemn cohorts before it to the northward.

CHAPTER XII.—Jack And His Chum Ambushed By The Bank Robbers.

And so they proceeded without molestation, or any real cause for apprehension of immediate danger, until at length they arrived at the confines of the grove at the northern end of the island, beyond which extended the clearing and the stretch of sandy soil lay between the grove and the solitary abode of old Huxley.

Among the great trees, whose blended shadows cast a deep shade over them, the two venturesome lads paused and looked forward eagerly.

They commanded a clear view of the landward side of the hermit's lake shore dwelling. The rude habitation stood solitary and grim looking under the new brilliant moonlight.

They saw a light in the window beside the door of the log house, and Jack whispered to his companion:

"It's luck for us that old Huxley doesn't keep a watch dog. Such an animal would be almost certain to give the alarm of our approach."

Just as the concluding words passed the boy's lips the door of the rude little dwelling opened, and Huxley came out, followed by a man whom Jack instantly recognized.

The fellow was one of the supposed bank robbers who wore the handsome diamond ring, which the lad had observed upon his hand when he encountered the fellow and his companion on the island the first time.

The lads noted that Huxley carried a covered basket, and that the stranger had a coffee pot in his hand. They did not come directly in the

direction of the concealed boys, but advanced to the grove, and entered it at a point west of the position of the former.

"Great Scott, Jack!" the croaker exclaimed in an excited whisper. "It looks as if they were going off for a moonlight picnic. What with Huxley's basket, that may be full of grub, and the coffee pot, probably they are fixed for a spread"

"We'll follow them anyhow," Jack replied. "I begin to suspect they are taking food to the comrade of the stranger, Croaker. I should not be surprised if something had happened to the fellow, so that he can't get about. Maybe he's hurt or sick, so he can't leave the island, and his friend won't desert him."

Jack lightly turned in the direction in which the two men had gone, and his boy companion stole stealthily after him.

Huxley and the stranger had passed into a dense part of the woods at the foot of the low hills which traversed the island in the central part.

"Take care, now," whispered Jack. "They have sighted us, though they did not let us know it, and perhaps they are laying in wait to pounce upon us in the thickets."

They had penetrated for some distance into the dense patch of woods, when it was divulged to them in a startling and sudden manner that they had been led into an ambush.

Suddenly, the stranger who had come with Huxley from the house of the latter, dashed out of the bushes close by the lads. He carried a heavy stick, and, before the croaker could leap aside he received a heavy blow on the head that stretched him at the ruffian's feet.

Jack was unarmed, and, as he knew he was no match for the powerful-looking and evidently desperate outlaw, much as he wanted to help his chum, he knew it would be useless to attempt to do so then, so he bounded away as swiftly as possible.

The ruffian dashed in pursuit of the fleeing lad, whose first impulse was to make for his boat. But he had not run far when it came to him that it would be an unworthy thing to leave his friend alone on the island with the desperadoes.

As in the previous race which he had engaged in with the strangers, he had distanced them, Jack now had little doubt that he could elude his present pursuer.

And as he put forth all the speed which he was capable of attaining, he soon had the satisfaction of seeing that he was leaving the desperado behind.

The latter being convinced, evidently, that he could not catch the lad, finally slowed up as he shouted in fierce and threatening tones:

"You sneak! The next time I catch you on this island I'll fix you! If you value your life you won't come here again."

With that, the fellow came to a full stop, completely out of breath, and Jack, darting onward, vanished from his sight in the nearest thicket.

As soon as the intervening bushes concealed him, the lad paused to regain his breath. Through the canopy of leaves he peered, and presently he saw the ruffian retracing his steps. He followed slowly, keeping a short distance behind. The villain made for the spot where Croaker was felled.

"Where's the kid I dropped? The other one got

off. He's a sprinter and I couldn't catch him," said the villain, as he joined Huxley.

"Your young chap jumped up suddenly and made off before I could raise a hand to detain him. Lamé as I am with the rheumatiz, it was no use for me to take after him, an' I didn't," replied the hermit, complainingly.

The two men hastened away, and Jack was about to follow them, when his footsteps were arrested by a groan as of some one in pain. He glanced about, and instantly caught sight of Dick, as the latter crawled out of a nearby thicket and raised a white and blood-stained face, as he murmured:

"Water! water! I am fainting!"

CHAPTER XIII.—A Mystery About Huxley's Conduct.

Seriously concerned because of Dick Brent's apparent alarming condition, as he raised his blood-stained face and called for water, Jack sprang to his side. The injured lad had got upon his knees, after crawling out of the thicket, but he was sinking back to the earth in a faint as Jack caught him in his arms.

"Dick! Dick!" he called, in frightened tones. "Speak to me, Dick!"

But the wounded lad did not answer, and Jack realized that he had lost consciousness.

Scooping up the clear, cool water in his hand, he dashed it in Dick's face, and bathed his wrists until the welcome sight of the returning color that crept into Dick's pale cheeks assured him that his well-directed efforts were to be rewarded.

But the injured lad regained consciousness slowly, and all the time, as he persevered in his friendly ministrations, Jack was fearful of the return of Huxley and his companion.

Dick groaned as the cool water was placed upon the cut by Jack's tender hand. But he immediately experienced relief, and when his friend had bound up the wound with his handkerchief and expressed the opinion that the injury was not very serious after all, he found that he had regained his strength sufficiently to get upon his feet.

He reeled a bit at first, but Jack supported him, and the attack of vertigo soon passed.

Jack made Dick lean upon his supporting arm, and they walked away.

"I wonder that you had the strength to get up and run into the thicket after the robber knocked you down before Huxley could reach you," said Jack.

Dick looked puzzled. "I didn't get up. I cannot imagine how I got into the thicket. I was knocked senseless by the blow from the robber's club. When I momentarily regained my senses and found myself in the thicket, out of which I managed to crawl, I was completely amazed, Jack. I knew that some one must have carried me there."

"This is mysterious. I heard Huxley say that you jumped up and ran off after the robber had knocked you down, and set off in pursuit of me. The recluse also said that he did not attempt to follow you, feeling that, because of his lameness, it would be impossible for him to overtake you," said Jack, in astonished tones.

"Well, I can't explain the matter," replied Dick.

Thus conversing, the two lads reached their boat without either hearing or seeing anything further of the hermit and his companion.

Dick was not strong enough to row vigorously, and when they had presently launched their boat, Jack was obliged to take upon himself the greater part of the labor of propelling the little craft.

The two lads reached their homes in safety, and the next day, while Jack was training at the clubhouse with Bat Donnelly as his instructor, Dick came in, and he assured his boy comrade that the cut in his head was healing all right and that he felt very well.

Dick took a seat and watched Jack and the old trainer as they put on the gloves and sparred a few rounds.

As Jack showed considerable skill for a novice, Dick was pleased to think that he might at least make a creditable showing with Porter. But he couldn't help croaking.

"I'm sorry you're going to fight Porter," said he. "You may put up a fight that will do you some credit, but Porter is a champion, and how Brookdale will crow over us when their man defeats you."

Jack laughed as he said:

"That's all right, croak away. Go on predicting evil. That's what you did about the boat race, and we won. I'd be worried if you didn't croak. Only do that and I'll have all the more confidence."

Next day Jack and some of the Star Club were out at the golf links, when a couple of young men from Brookdale arrived. One of the latter was a noted golf player, and he challenged Nails. The latter accepted, and the others looked on while the Brookdale man defeated the Stars' player without great difficulty. At the end of the game, Jack ventured to criticize the play of the Brookdale man a little, but in a friendly spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.—At The Golf Links—Jack's Game On The Island.

Now Morton Carter—such was the name of the golf expert from Brookdale—was a remarkably touchy person, and his bump of self-sufficiency and conceit had been developed to the limit by success and flattery. Then, too, he had recently won the gold championship.

He didn't take Jack's good-natured banter in a friendly spirit, but, on the contrary, showed some temper, as he said:

"Perhaps you would like to teach me something about golf that I don't know."

"Oh, no—I don't pretend to be able to do that," replied Jack, pleasantly.

Mattie Clayton and several of the young ladies of the town, who were fond of golf, were present, and they gathered around the speakers.

"I understand you play a fair game. Suppose you try your hand with me? Then you can show how you can improve upon my shots, to which you took exception," said Carter presently.

Jack quietly accepted the challenge and to the surprise of all present won from Carter by a small margin.

Carter had the good grace to take his defeat much more pleasantly than might have been ex-

pected, and he even condescended to compliment Jack, though he somewhat spoiled the effect of his commendation by saying:

"But you know the best of players do not always win, and I hardly think you could repeat your present success with me."

"Some time we'll try conclusions again, but I haven't time today," Jack replied, and then he turned to Mattie, and despite his determination to obey his father, he could not resist the temptation to walk a little with her, and he knew she must be anxious to hear if he had made any further progress in the way of locating the hidden men of Indian Island.

As the young couple sauntered along on the way from the golf links toward the town Jack related his last night's adventures on the island.

Mattie evinced great interest, and when he had concluded he saw that he had alarmed her.

"Jack," said she anxiously, "I am afraid that you will come to harm at the hands of those evil men. Don't you think you had better not make another attempt against them alone. Why not now tell the chief of police all, and trust to him to find and arrest the robbers?"

"I haven't the greatest amount of confidence in the ability of our local officers, though I do not doubt that they try to do the best they can. Then, too, I think of the reward. I'm after that, Mattie. And I must have at least one more try for it," he answered.

Mattie tried to argue against this decision, but for once she found that she could not move the determined lad from the course which he had determined upon.

On the morrow Jack happened to be in his father's office at the lumber yard when who should come in but Huxley.

He had come to negotiate for the sale of some timber, and Jack covetly watched him as he talked with his father. As he studied the face of the old recluse it struck the lad that he wore a hunted and troubled look, which was not formerly characteristic of his expression.

When Huxley had concluded his business and left the office Jack's father remarked:

"The old fellow seems to be failing of late, and he looks mighty troubled about something, though I don't know why he should, for he must have plenty of money. He has been making and saving for many years, and though he never has much money in bank, so far as I knew, I'll wager that he has a snug fortune in cash hidden away somewhere on his island. Huxley has always, since I have known him, been a bit of a miser, as well as a recluse. He is a man of good business ability, and it's strange that he should have chosen to isolate himself from his fellows as he has done for these many years."

Jack said nothing, but his father's remarks gave him the assurance that he was not the victim of imagination, when he fancied that the recluse looked seriously troubled and apprehensive.

That night a gentle rain was falling, and it was very dark when Jack and Dick once more set out for the island.

They reached the southern shore about ten o'clock, and because of the gloom they were sure that no lookout could have discovered their approach.

As soon as they had secured their boat, they

proceeded toward Huxley's house, and Jack said to his companion:

"I have decided that the only way by which we can hope to get at Huxley's secret is to play the part of eavesdroppers at the hermit's house, in the hope that we may overhear some conversation between him and the bank robber, that will throw light upon the reason for Huxley's seeming friendly variance with the rascals."

Dick said that he approved of this, and presently the two lads were stealing up to the log house on the northern end of the island.

They saw a light in the window, and Jack led the way toward it cautiously. When he came to the wall of the house he sank down under the window and listened, while Dick crouched close at his side.

Presently Jack drew himself up, and cautiously tried the window sash, thinking that if he could raise it a little, he might be able to overhear the conversation which he was so anxious to learn the purports of.

The sash was not secured. Gently Jack pushed upon it, and it went up slowly. He raised it an inch, and then stopped. The drawn curtain concealed him, and he put his ear to the open space and listened intently, while the men within did not cease talking.

CHAPTER XV.—Jack and Dick Surprised by the Hermit.

The first words that distinctly came to Jack's hearing served to interest him greatly. The hermit was the speaker, and he said, in tones which revealed deep feeling:

"It is a cruel thing for you to take advantage of me; as you came here I was living a peaceful, honest life, and I hoped to end my days here respected by the community of the adjacent country."

"Yes I know all that well enough, but you must admit that we have only acted according to the law, which must always govern men who are in desperate straits—that is, we acted upon the law of self-preservation in coming to your island, and demanding your assistance to enable us to elude pursuit," answered a voice which Jack knew belonged to the man whom he had seen in company with Huxley on the occasion of his last two visits to the domain of the recluse.

Precisely," rejoined Huxley, "and by so doing you have brought upon me suspicion that I am a willing confederate of yours, and not only thus injured my reputation but placed me in a position which may at any time cause the officers of the law to arrest me as your accomplice in the robbery of the Ashford bank. The two boys from the town know that you are hidden on the island, and they have seen me with you, under circumstances which, must have convinced them that I am your friend, and that I am trying to assist you to elude the officers. Oh, why could you not have left me in peace?"

"Don't talk nonsense. We should not have come here if Boger had not sprained his ankle so he could not walk. I had all that I could do to get him into the boat. The island seemed to offer a good hiding place, and so I rowed for it. We did not know that you were here until we saw you on the island. I call it a bit of good

luck, our finding you. Had I known that Boger was to be taken seriously ill that night I might have been tempted to leave him to shift for himself. But, since your knowledge of medicine has served him well, I am glad that I brought him here. Now, as to your getting into trouble on my account, I couldn't foresee that. And maybe you need have no fear on that score. The two boys from the town are evidently keeping their mouths shut about us in the hope of getting the reward themselves by locating our hiding place and causing our arrest. Otherwise, the officers would have come to search the island again. The way I figure it is that those fly kids will come again, and I mean to make sure that their next visit is their last."

"For Heaven's sake do not be rash! Wait! Wait! I have already assured you that Boger will be well enough to leave the island very soon now. You know that, in other days, I was a successful physician, and you can rely upon my judgment. Meanwhile, let the two boys search for your hiding place if they will. I am sure they will not find it, for I lived here five years, and explored every part of the island again and again, yet I did not discover it. Had not the Indian hunter, who died at my house five years after I came here, told me the secret of the hidden retreat in gratitude for my friendly ministrations, I should not doubt to this day have remained in ignorance of its existence. No, you may be sure the boys will not discover your place of concealment," said Huxley, earnestly.

"Well, let it go at that. I'll agree that I won't make way with the boy spies unless I am satisfied that it's necessary to do so in order to prevent the discovery by them of our hidden retreat. Boger is mighty grateful to you, and he knows he owes his life to your medical skill. He don't want to cause you any more trouble than we can help, and to say the truth neither do I," replied Krug.

"Good! Perhaps a way can be found to induce them. But leave that to me," said Huxley.

"All right. But I don't believe you can scare those young devils off," answered Krug. Jack then heard the sounds of movements on the part of the two men, which warned him that Krug was about turning to the door. Grasping Dick by the arm, he swiftly and silently led him around the rear corner of the small dwelling, and a moment later they heard Krug bid Huxley good-night at the open door. Then he walked away. The lads remained where they were until they heard the door closed, and then concluding that Huxley had retired within, they stole after the robber.

As Krug crossed the strip of sandy soil that intervened between the log house and the adjacent woods the crunching noise of his footsteps were quite distinctly audible. But when he passed out upon the turf-covered soil at the woods' edge those guiding sounds immediately ceased. The lads glided over the sandy tract noiselessly, but at the edge of the woods they came to a halt and listened keenly. Still no sound of footsteps reached them, and they did not know, of course, in what direction the robber had gone. After a moment Jack whispered:

"The darkness is against us. But let us go in the direction which the rascal took when we followed him from the hermit's house the last

time." Dick assented, and they stealthily proceeded in the course which Jack advised. Anon, Jack paused abruptly and seemed to listen. Then he whispered:

"I thought I heard a suspicious rustling of the bushes, a little to the right and rear of our position."

"I don't hear anything and certainly the robber cannot be behind us. I guess you only heard the wind moving the bushes," whispered Dick.

"Perhaps you're right," said Jack, as he failed to hear the sound again. They moved on at once in the cautious manner which had thus far characterized their advance. And though from time to time they paused to listen, no further suspicious sounds either from the front or the rear reached them. At length the evident uselessness of their undertaking so convincingly impressed itself on Jack that he stopped, and Dick also halted. At almost the same moment a bright light flashed in the faces of the lads, and to their amazement Huxley appeared directly before them with a lantern in his hand.

CHAPTER XVI.—A Treaty With the Hermit of the Island.

The first impulse of the two lads was to take flight, as the hermit of the island suddenly appeared before them. But as he continued to hold his lantern so that the light fell upon their frightened faces, he said, in reassuring tones:

"Don't be frightened, boys. I mean you no harm."

"Why should we think you do not mean to injure us?" demanded Jack, still on the alert, and watching Huxley narrowly.

"Because I have already saved one of you. Did I not carry your young companion into the thicket when he was helpless? Did I not secrete him so that the man who struck him down could not find him when he returned?"

"I guess that's so," admitted Jack.

"Then that should convince you that I really mean you no harm," replied Huxley.

"What do you want of us?" asked Jack.

"I want to shield you from harm and to persuade you to abandon the quest for the men you are seeking here. Come with me to my house, and I think I can convince you that it is best that you should discontinue your search." Jack thought for a moment. Then he said:

"We will go with you."

"Very well. I am convinced that you will not regret doing so," answered the hermit. Dick assented, and the hermit proceeded without speaking further until they arrived at his house. He entered, and the lads followed. The door was closed, and putting down his lantern, he turned to the lads, who stood between him and the door, determined that he should not entrap them in the dwelling.

"I am sure that you lads are trying to locate the hiding place of the strangers who are on the island because you think they are the bank robbers, and you hope to secure the reward that has been offered. Have you stopped to reflect that you may find it a difficult thing to prove that these men are guilty? From what I have heard of the bank robbers I conclude that no one saw

them; therefore, no one can identify these men, even if they are the guilty ones, which is a question that I do not set myself to answer," said Huxley. Jack was tempted to tell him that he had overheard enough of the conversation between Krug and himself to satisfy him fully regarding the identity of the strangers as the bank robbers, but he refrained from so doing, and said, hoping to draw the recluse out:

"I am sure that one man saw the bank robbers, and that he can identify them. I mean Roy Clayton, the missing bank clerk, whom I hope will yet appear to testify against the robbers."

"It appears that young Clayton is the accomplice of the robbers. But no matter, my object in bringing you here may be frankly stated. You are after the reward; even if you cause the capture of the strangers, and keep it a profound secret that you have discovered they are in hiding here on this island, am I right in thinking that you will make sure of this large sum of money by accepting my offer?" said Huxley. For a moment, it must be confessed, Jack was tempted. But he put the temptation from him and said:

"I am astonished, Mr. Huxley, that you should think so badly of us. No, sir, you are entirely wrong in thinking that you can buy us off. Should we consent to such a thing we would become, to all intents, accomplices of the robbers. It is true that we are after the reward. But I, at least, have other incentives. I believe the bank robbers know what has become of Roy Clayton, and that they deliberately planned to place unjust suspicion upon him. I am determined to find out the truth about Roy. Then, too, as my father lost a large sum through the robbery of the bank, I am personally interested in the recovery of the stolen money." Huxley looked much disappointed, and he replied with an air of sincerity which was convincing.

"One thing is certain, Roy Clayton is not on this island. Whether the strangers are the robbers or not, the missing clerk is not here, and I do not believe the men here know anything about young Clayton's whereabouts."

"I wonder if we can believe that," said Jack, though he felt confident that Huxley was speaking the truth.

"I'll swear to it, if you wish!" Huxley exclaimed.

"Mr. Huxley," said the lad, "I think you would like to be honest, and that fear alone causes you to treat the strangers in a friendly manner. Why not defy them and surrender them to justice? You have won the confidence and respect of the community. Do not forfeit it now." The face of the hermit reflected the strong emotions that swayed his heart and mind as he replied:

"I cannot, I cannot, because—oh, because I cannot recall my bitterly regretted past, but what am I saying? Do not heed me. My mind wanders. Let me speak again of the danger which will constantly menace you if you continue the pursuit of the strangers. Be warned. If money will not tempt you to discontinue the dangerous quest, then let considerations of personal safety, the preservation of your lives, serve to deter you," the hermit cried.

"Mr. Huxley, in our town there is a poor widow and her daughter, who are suffering all the agony of suspense and grief which the mysterious ab-

sence of a beloved only son and only brother can occasion them. I speak, of course, of Roy Clayton's mother and sister, and I call upon you in the name of ordinary humanity and pity, of which you may stand in need yourself some day, to have pity on them and try to find out the truth about Roy from the robbers."

"I have already said that I do not believe the strangers know anything about the whereabouts of young Clayton. But you have not appealed in vain in behalf of the anxious mother and sister, and I pledge you the word of a man whom cruel fate is drawing on against his will, and against his best impulses, that I'll do my best to get at the truth about Roy Clayton's disappearance. But mark you, I do not admit that the strangers know the secret, do not admit that they were concerned in the robbery of the bank," answered Huxley. Then he glanced at the clock significantly. Jack took the hint, and said to Dick:

"I think we'd better go."

"Yes, it's getting late," assented the croaker.

"If at any time you should think better of your decision in regard to the offer of the ready money which I made you a bit ago, you have only to let me know, and you'll receive the cash at once," said the hermit, as the lads turned to the door.

"You will never hear that we have changed our minds," answered Jack. A moment later the lads were outside the cabin. Without delay they proceeded to their boat. Hastily they launched it and rowed across the lake to the town whence they had come. On the way they discussed the events of the night, and Jack expressed the hope that from Huxley they might soon learn the truth about Roy Clayton. "And since we heard Huxley assure Krug that his sick pal would soon be able to travel, it seems to me that the rascals may presently get away from the island without our knowledge if we do not look sharp," he added.

CHAPTER XVII.—A Canoe Race on the River.

There was a meeting of the Star Athletic Club the next afternoon, and most all the members assembled in the "audience chamber," as the boys facetiously dubbed the meeting room. Jack presided. Having called the meeting to order, he read an anonymous note which he had received that morning. The missive ran as follows:

"JAKE FAIR:

"DEAR SIR:—I hain't speakin' no names, but I knows on what kin squeal on the party what put up the job ter have yer oar sawed afore the boat race at Brookdale. If so be you'se wants to git on ter the chap, put ten of the long green in an envelope an' leave it at the Indian Island Hotel. Address,

"ON THE SQUAR'"

When Jack had read this note he related how he had overheard Nick Price, the drunken hostler of the hotel named in the note, virtually admit that Tom Porter had bribed him to saw the oar. Then Jack said:

"I do not think that we need waste ten dollars

on Nick Price, who is no doubt the author of the anonymous note, for I am confident that he hasn't enough nerve to resist the temptation to go free himself by exposing the party who bribed him. When I am ready to do so, I mean to have Price arrested on the charge of sawing my oar. Until I move in the matter I request all the members to keep this a secret."

Everyone seemed to approve of this, and presently Jack read another letter. This was from the Brookdale Club. The communication politely proposed that, as the Stars now had a splendidly equipped gymnasium, they should give a competition athletic entertainment, with the assistance of the Brookdale Club, and divide the gate money.

"Mr. President," said Nails, "I propose that we accede to the Brookdale proposition. We have quite a debt on our clubhouse yet unpaid as you are aware, and it seems to me that we should not neglect any opportunity to earn money with which to discharge our obligations." With that Nails sat down, and Joe Carr squeaked out:

"Mr. President, I agree with the gentleman who just had the floor. Athletic entertainments always have been popular in this town, and with the people of both Ashford and Brookdale to draw from we are sure to have a crowded house." Jay Bird sat down amid a murmur of applause, that plainly indicated the approval of the club members in general.

"Second the motion!" exclaimed Ned Dudley.

Jack then put the motion, with the result that it was unanimously carried. He then appointed a committee to confer with the Brookdales and arrange a programme of the proposed entertainment and fix upon the date for the same. The regular order of business was then quickly gone through with, after which a motion to adjourn was promptly carried. Jack and Dick Brent, the croaker, had each bought a canoe that spring, and they were both becoming quite expert canoeists. After the club meeting the two lads paddled down the river toward Brookdale. They managed their canoes skillfully, and they were nearing the rival town when a shout greeted them from the shore.

Glancing in that direction, they saw half a dozen canoes drawn up on the sand under the river bank, and standing about the canoes dressed in rowing shirts and trunks, they observed six lads of the Brookdale. The boys of the Brookdale Athletic Club had taken to canoeing two years previously, and Jack and Dick understood that some of them had become excellent canoe experts. They did not at first quite make out what the Brookdale lads shouted. But the call was repeated, and then they understood. The Jack of the rival club asked them to join them and have a friendly trial of skill and speed with the canoes.

"All right!" Jack shouted back, since the contest was to be for amusement only. And presently he and Dick paddled up to the sandy bank where the other canoeists had landed. Dick Brent went out, as he and Jack paddled up to the Brookdale canoeists:

"You fellows have been at the paddle for two seasons, and this is the first summer that we have had canoes, so if you want to race you ought to

give us a start. You can't expect us to be as proficient as you are!"

"We'll give you a start!" Thus assented a couple of the others and it seemed all hands were so confident of their superiority, that they were eager to agree to Dick's proposition.

"Here, Mathews, paddle down stream fifty feet, as I pace the distance on the shore, and the Stars' man can start from your canoe, while our canoeist starts from here. Fifty feet is a big start in a canoe race. I don't think we can do anything fairer," said a lad, called Watt Way, who was the captain of the Brookdale canoeing men.

"That's all right," assented Jack and Dick in a breath, and as the two lads were about equally expert, Jack thought they had better leave it to chance to decide which one of them should compete in the canoe race. Of this he spoke to Dick, who agreed with him, and they tossed for the honor of holding up the reputation of their club. Dick won the toss, and the Brookdales chose a boy called Horace King to act as their champion. The Brookdales had been practicing on the river at this point all summer, and a half a mile course was already marked off. A red flag set on the bank away down stream marked the bend of the course. The canoeists who first paddled by that flag would win the race.

As soon as the men were ready for the race, and Mathews had taken his place fifty yards down stream Dick paddled down to him. Horace King meanwhile paddled out opposite the landing. At the word, "Go," the two canoeists began to paddle and Dick thought that with a start of fifty feet he might win the race. Each of the oarsmen used a double-bladed paddle, but the Brookdale man paddled in the generally approved manner, kneeling on the right knee, and putting in a long sweeping stroke with a sideways motion of the body on the right side of the boat. His whole body was exposed to the wind, which came from the shore and it helped him along. It was a pretty sight to see how gracefully he kept his balance, and how he made his canoe skim through the water.

Dick did not look particularly graceful, but he rowed a steady stroke, seated on the bottom of the canoe with his legs under the cross-piece, which his body almost touched. His feet rested on a light footbrace at each side of the canoe. He was so low in his craft that he offered resistance to the wind. The stroke which Dick employed has become known as the American stroke, an arm and shoulder stroke, nearly straight forward, and his canoe was kept perfectly steady. The greatest part of his force was to put forth at the beginning of the stroke. He feathered his paddle perfectly. The Brookdales laughed at Dick's method, but they ceased laughing when they saw that half the course had been made, and that their champion was not yet able to overtake Dick. Indeed, he kept half the lead which had been given him at the start.

When half the course was made the Brookdale man began to paddle the best he knew, and he soon decreased Dick's lead a little. The spectators paddled along the shore after the racers, and of course the Brookdale cheered their man. Jack shouted to Dick, encouragingly. He lay forward almost at full length as he saw that his op-

ponent was closing up, and used the paddle in such a way that he pulled with one hand and pushed with the other. But in spite of all his efforts the Brookdale man slowly but steadily gained as they neared the red flag. Presently Dick glanced back and saw that his rival's canoe was almost alongside of him.

But the flag was only a few feet ahead. Now or never he must increase his lead, he well knew. But he had not a bit of reserve strength. He had already put forth every effort of which he was capable, and so he knew that unless the other failed a little in his speed the race was lost to him. Fortunately for Dick, that was just what occurred. The Brookdale canoeist did not possess the wonderful "staying power" which Dick had. The former had exhausted himself. His stroke weakened a trifle, and in a moment or so Dick's canoe shot by the flag a quarter of a length ahead.

CHAPTER XVIII.—The Ruse to Outwit the Robbers—The Missing Bank Clerk.

The Brookdale men were completely astonished, and of course Jack was delighted with the result of the race. When Jack and Dick presently paddled homeward they left a discomfited set of canoeists behind them. But before they left, Horace King urged Dick to agree to paddle another race with him before the end of the season. To this Dick agreed, but he said smiling:

"I wonder if you'll be willing to give me fifty feet start the next time."

King grinned as he shook his head. On the way homeward Jack said to his comrade:

"How about going to Indian Island again?"

"I'm ready to go there any time that you are," answered Dick.

"I've got a scheme in mind that will put the strangers of the island off their guard, I think," said Jack.

"What is your plan?"

"This: I will lay down in the bottom of the boat, with a piece of sailcloth over me, and you will row to the island with me, along about sunset. You will land, and look about a while, and I'll remain hidden in the boat until darkness falls. Then I'll slip out of it and hide in the bushes. You will act as if you were discouraged about finding the strangers, and finally row away from the island, leaving me hidden there. I take it that the robber called Krug will see you come and go, and so be satisfied, when you are well away from the island, that he need not fear there is anyone at hand to spy upon him."

Before sunset that evening a rowboat, in which no one but Dick could be seen, left the dock at the lumber yard, and the solitary rower proceeded in the direction of the island.

"Well, we're off," said a muffled voice that came from the bottom of the boat. There Jack lay, concealed just as he had planned.

They continued to converse in low tones, and as the boat neared the island Dick gave a start and said:

"By George, there's Krug."

"What is he?"

"I just saw him dodge behind a tree beyond the beach. Ah, there he is again! I see his head. He is peering around the tree trunk, straight this way, and of course he has seen our boat."

Dick moved on, and presently the boat grounded on the sand. Meanwhile Krug had stolen away, and Dick had caught sight of him as he dodged along among the trees until he reached a thicket. Then the robber vanished from the lads' sight. Having drawn up his boat, Dick whispered to Jack telling the concealed lad about the disappearance of the robber.

"All right, go ahead now, play your part by pretending to search for him. At the same time keep your hand on the weapon in your pocket, and try not to allow Krug to surprise you. Steer clear of thickets or any place in which he can lay hidden to ambush you," whispered Jack.

Then Dick walked away, and the sounds of his receding footsteps were soon lost to Jack. Dick wandered about until darkness began to fall, but he did not encounter the bank robber. He was conscious at times, however, of the feeling that unseen eyes were watching him, and he had no doubt that Krug was near, under cover, but closely observing all his movements. At length Dick went back to the boat. When he reached it he saw that Jack was no longer concealed in the bottom of the little craft, and congratulating himself that everything had gone all right so far that night, he pushed the boat off and rowed away.

Meanwhile, when the shades of night were falling, Jack had crept out of the boat, and gliding across the narrow beach, he had quickly reached the shelter of the adjacent woods. The youth had reached the edge of the woods when he saw Krug standing on the sand beyond, looking out upon the lake, and evidently seeking to assure himself that the boat in which Dick had gone did not put about and come back. Finally Krug moved away in a northerly course. As success depended upon his not being discovered, the lad sought to follow Krug with the utmost stealthiness. The robber kept to the open beach, and Jack stole along under cover of the woods beyond the narrow stretch of sand. Just as Krug reached the edge of the timber he paused, gave a start, and stood still, looking intently out upon the lake and seeming to listen.

At the same instant Jack fancied he heard the sound of oars. A moment and the sound reached him more distinctly. Then he knew that his first impression was right—that a boat was approaching the island directly off his position. He was much surprised, and he did not believe that Dick was returning as soon. But very soon the sound of someone making a landing reached Jack's hearing, and it was evident that Krug heard and understood the sound. Footsteps were heard by Jack as someone crossed the sandy beach. Then he saw the dark figure of a man. The lad was unable to make out his face, however, and he proceeded swiftly in the direction of the hermit's home. Krug stole after the mysterious night visitant to the island. Jack in turn glided after the robber. At length, from the edge of the timber Jack saw the unknown enter the house of the hermit, but still he did not see the man's face. Huxley opened the door for him, and the lad saw that he gave a tremendous start and heard him exclaim:

"Good heavens! You here?"

Meantime, Krug was crouching at the edge of the timber at but a short distance from Jack, and the latter knew that the robber witnessed the arrival of the stranger at the home of the recluse. Presently Krug stole up to the log house, and peered in at the window through which a light gleamed. Then Jack made a detour and reached the house from the opposite side. There was a window in the wall there, and as he looked through the portal he could scarcely restrain an exclamation of astonishment, for he saw Roy Clayton, the missing bank clerk.

CHAPTER XIX.—Roy Clayton's Strange Story.

As Jack stared at Roy Clayton through the window of the hermit's dwelling startling conjectures regarding the meaning of his presence there flashed through his excited mind. But no satisfactory explanation of the surprising incident occurred to him, and in the hope of overhearing something that might elucidate the mystery, he put his ear to a broken pane of glass, and listened eagerly. The rent and worn shade was drawn, but through the holes in it he continued to look as he sought to hear what passed between the two men within, and whilst he stood at the window the curtain, tattered though it was, served to screen him from the sight of the inmates of the room. Roy Clayton stood before the hermit, and it needed but a glance at him to assure the lad that the young bank clerk had recently passed through some ordeal that had wrought havoc with his peace of mind.

"Mr. Huxley," said Roy Clayton in agitated, tremulous tones, "my deceased father was a good friend of yours for years after you came to live here, and I have come to you now to implore you in the name of the friendship which you bore my father to help me in this time of my most urgent need. Of course you must know that I am under suspicion, that I am suspected of robbing the Ashford bank?"

"I attended a lecture on the night of the robbery. It was after eleven o'clock when I was on my way home. Suddenly, as I was passing through the alley beside the bank to shorten the distance to my home I heard footsteps. As I turned in the direction whence those footsteps sounded, I was felled to the earth by a heavy blow that descended on my head. My senses deserted me, and I knew no more until I regained consciousness in a dark room.

"As the recollection of what had befallen me came to my mind, I placed my hand in my pocket for the bank keys. They were gone. Before I had time to reflect, but as the conviction that I had been made the victim of a plot to rob the bank flashed upon my mind, a light appeared in the room, and two strange men approached me.

"Now young man," said one, "we have taken some sixty thousand dollars from the bank, and left everything so it will be known in the morning that the bank was opened with the keys you carried, and that the robbers knew the combination that you know. We want to make the public think you did the job, so that we can put a safe distance

between us and the town without danger of arrest. So we have determined to kill you, and sink your body in the lake, or give you a chance to make a grand start in life in some distant place, where nobody will know you. If you will agree to go to the nearest city on the two-forty express to-night, we will give you ten thousand dollars in cash, and provide you with a disguise so that no one can possibly recognize you on the train or at the depot.

"I saw the speaker was in deadly earnest, and I weakly consented to take the money and flee. Then a third man was called into the room. The robbers disguised me with a wig and false beard, and then they gave me ten thousand dollars and the third man escorted me to the train. He had a revolver in his pocket, and he thrust it against my side through his pocket, swearing he would kill me if I made a sign to betray him. He rode beside me to the city and took me to a room in a bad section of the city and kept me a prisoner.

"The man of the robbers' band, in whose house I was imprisoned, has a daughter who is at heart a good and honest girl, and who abhors the life which her father is leading.

"She provided me with a disguise in which I reached Ashford to-night. There I learned, while of course no one suspected my identity, that almost everyone considered that I was guilty of the bank robbery. Convinced then that few people would credit the story which I have told you, and to the truth of which I am ready to make oath, I decided to come to you, as my deceased father's old friend, and ask you to advise me how to proceed in order to prove my innocence."

Huxley meditated for a moment, but at length he said:

"I do not know how to advise you. I do not suppose that your story will be believed unless evidence in support of its truth can be produced."

"Since you will not advise me I will go to Ashford to-night and give myself up," said Roy Clayton.

As the young bank clerk expressed his determination to surrender him self to the officers of the law, Jack saw the curtain of the window in the opposite wall raised a few inches and the face of Krug appeared.

A terrible fear for the life of Roy Clayton took hold upon Jack's mind. He suspected that Krug would try to slay Roy before he could leave the island.

So after he saw Krug disappear from the window, he entered Huxley's cabin and greeted Roy and Mr. Huxley. He told Roy about Krug's appearance in the window opposite, that he (Jack) had also heard Roy's talk with Mr. Huxley, and advised him to go at once to the chief of police before Krug could make an attack on him.

He consented, and he and Jack left the island in Jack's boat and Roy went to his mother's house after bidding Jack good-night.

Roy remained at his mother's house until morning, and at an early hour he presented himself at the office of the chief of police.

Of course his appearance there created the greatest surprise, and his narrative of all his perilous experiences since the night of the robbery was listened to with the deepest interest by the chief and his associates.

When Roy had concluded the chief said:

"I am inclined to believe that you are telling the truth, but I shall have to place you under arrest."

It chanced that the court was in session at Ashford at this time, and much to the surprise of the general public, an eminent lawyer appeared before the court and made application for the release of Roy on bail.

The presiding judge demanded to know who would go on Roy's bond, and there was more surprise when the lawyer announced that Huxley the hermit had offered to do so. The judge consulted with the district attorney, and then announced that he would release Roy on ten thousand dollars bail.

Huxley immediately came forward and produced a certified check for the amount and signed the bail bond.

To the court the hermit said:

"Your Honor, Roy Clayton's father was one of the best friends I ever had. I believed in the innocence of his son, and so I do not hesitate to become security for his appearance at court."

An hour later Roy Clayton was free.

CHAPTER XX.—Huxley Brings the News of the Flight of the Bank Robbers.

Jack Fair was in the court room when Roy Clayton was released on bail, and he accompanied Roy to his home.

Two days later Jack met Huxley on the street.

"Jack," said Huxley, "I have disappointing news for you. The robbers have left the island."

The lad looked at the speaker searchingly, but Huxley did not flinch under his scrutiny. On the contrary, he met the lad's eyes fairly. But he did not fail to read the expression of doubt that was plainly visible in the lad's eyes, it appeared, for he added quickly:

"I swear to you, by all my hopes of Heaven and by everything that I hold most sacred, that I am telling you the truth."

Jack went onward to the clubhouse, feeling disappointed and at fault. In the gymnasium he met Dick. But Donnelly, the boxing instructor, was there waiting to put on the gloves with Jack. But the latter took Dick aside, and acquainted him with the disappointing intelligence which Huxley had brought.

"I always thought we should fail. You know I told you so," said Dick.

The next day Huxley went to the post office in Ashford, as he was in the habit of doing every other day. And he received a letter which he opened with trembling hands, as he recognized the handwriting on the envelope.

Hastily he read the contents of the letter, and then a joyful exclamation escaped his lips, and he hurried out of the post office, and returned to the island.

As soon as he had landed there, he set out for the camp of the Stars' club. There he found Jack, and taking the lad aside, he said joyfully:

"I have just received the best news that could come to me. Jack, I will now tell you that the secret of mine, which the robbers held, was a secret of crime. Years ago, in another part of the country, I was accused of the crime of murder, and though I was innocent, circumstantial evidence

was so strong against me that I fled in terror, not daring to stand trial. I came here, and have since lived the life of a recluse, as you know, I avoided all men, for fear that I might meet some one who had known me in other days. Krug had known me in my old home. He knew that I was a fugitive, and he threatened to expose me if I did not befriend him and his pal. I was weak enough to do as he asked, as you are aware. But to-day I received a letter from a trusted friend, who has always known my address, and that letter informed me that, on his deathbed, the man who really committed the crime of which I was falsely accused, made a full confession of his guilt. So, at last, my innocence is proven, and I no longer fear any man." That evening Jack visited Huxley, and the recluse told him that as there was no longer any reason why he should live the life of a hermit, he meant soon to go to live in the town of Ashford. Having spent a pleasant evening at the house of the hermit, Jack was about to go, when he said:

"I am curious to see the cave which was the hiding place of Boger and Krug."

"You shall do so. I will give you explicit directions so that you cannot fail to find it at any time that you may choose to visit it," answered the hermit, and he did so.

"Now I am sure that I can go straight to the hidden cave, and I think I'll visit it on the morrow," said Jack. A little later he took leave of Huxley and returned to camp.

CHAPTER XXI.—Conclusion.

Next day, after he had eaten a light midday lunch Jack sauntered off by himself for a walk. He was out of sight of the camp when it suddenly occurred to him that he would while away an hour by visiting the hidden cave which had been occupied by the fugitive bank robbers. Proceeding according to Huxley's directions, Jack soon arrived at the foot of the range of low, wooded hills which traversed the central part of the island. Then he struck southward, and guided by certain landmarks which the hermit had mentioned, he at length came to a ledge of white rocks, over which there were festooned a natural canopy of vines.

A moment later he passed under the thick curtain of vegetation that entirely screened the greater portion of the face of the ledge, and presently he came to the mouth of a cave. Holding the blazing match above his head he saw that the cave was about twelve feet wide and probably some eighteen or twenty feet long. Jack was standing with his back to the entrance of the cavern, when he heard a faint sound from the rear that startled him. He wheeled about instantly, but as he did so a heavy blow descended upon his head and he sank senseless upon the floor.

"You have crossed my path once too often, young chap," growled Krug, as he saw that Jack had regained his senses. "I came back after the money which I left hidden here when I fled with Boger. I didn't know your gang was camped on

the island, and I narrowly escaped discovery by some of the lads. I shall not risk trying to get off with the swag by daylight, but shall stay here until after dark. As for you, of course, I can't let you go. When I set out to leave the island, I'll leave you here, and you'll have to take your chances of being found. If you perish it's your own lookout. You had no call to come here. I wonder how you happened to find the cave, which you so long vainly searched for," said Krug, coolly.

Jack was bound hand and foot. The prospect of being left to perish in the cave unnerved him. Meantime at the camp of the club boys Jack was soon missed, and Bat Donnelly became apprehensive on his account. Now, as Dick Brent was the only one of the party that shared with Jack the secret that the robbers had been hidden on the island, he alone suspected that possibly Krug and his pal might be concerned in his chum's disappearance. Acting upon an inspiration of the moment, while he was out looking for Jack, Dick had gone to Huxley's house, and told the hermit that Jack was strangely missing. Huxley then said he would make a search for the lad.

As soon as Huxley heard of Jack's disappearance he set out for the robbers' retreat, for it occurred to him that the desperadoes might have returned there, and as he remembered that Jack meant to visit the cave that day, he thought that it was possible that the lad might have been surprised and captured at the cavern. Reaching the vicinity of the cave, Huxley advanced noiselessly, and with a revolver ready in his hand. Undiscovered, he peered into the cave, and saw Jack and his captor. The latter was seated with his back partially turned to the entrance. Suddenly Huxley leaped upon the robber, and thrusting the muzzle of his weapon against the head of the surprised ruffian, he cried out:

"Surrender, or I fire!" Krug threw up his hands and Huxley made him turn his face to the wall and keep his hands up.

"If you move I'll shoot!" said the hermit. Then, still pointing his revolver at the robber with one hand, he drew a knife in the other and quickly severed the cords that secured the young captive. Jack bounded to his feet, and acting upon Huxley's orders, he at once bound Krug with the same cords that had just fallen from his own arms and legs.

Huxley now told Jack to return to his club-mates and he would stand guard over Krug until he brought some of them back with him to take Krug away. So Jack went to the camp. You can imagine that his clubmates just about went wild with joy at seeing Jack coming. Jack ex-

plained matters to them, and as soon as possible Jack hurried away with Bat Donnelly and Dick. They went straight to the cave, and here they found Huxley standing guard over Krug.

"I've great news for you, Jack!" cried Huxley at once. "I have found forty thousand dollars of the money that was stolen from the bank concealed here in the cave," and he held up a leather bag. A little later Krug was marched to a boat and placed in it. Huxley, who carried the recovered money, and Jack, Dick and Donnelly entered the boat and rowed it to the town on the lake shore. There Krug was turned over to the police, and the recovered money was returned to the bank. On the way across the lake Krug had told his captors that Boger lay ill in a deserted hut in the woods on the lake shore. As soon as possible Jack, Dick and Huxley went to the hut. There they found Boger, and placing him in a wagon, they brought him to town and delivered him to the authorities. Then, by Huxley's advice, Jack and Dick put in a claim for the reward, and we may here state that some days later it was paid to them, and the two lads found themselves the heroes of the town, while of course everybody acknowledged that Roy Clayton was entirely innocent.

The next day Nick Price and the man whom the rascally hostler had for a witness of his villainous bargain with Porter gave their evidence before a committee composed of members of the rival clubs, and Porter was found guilty of bringing Price to saw Jack's oar, and duly expelled from the Brookdale Club. And now we bring the story of the Star Athletic Club to a close, but perhaps we should add that Roy Clayton was reinstated as a clerk in the bank, and that Jack and Mattie continued to be sweethearts, and some years hence no doubt they will become man and wife. Krug was tried, convicted, and punished according to law, but Boger died before he was brought to trial.

Next week's issue will contain "THE ABERDEEN ATHLETES; OR, THE BOY CHAMPIONS OF THE COUNTRY CLUB."

"Is that clock right?" asked the caller who had outstayed his welcome. His hostess yawned. Oh, no!" she said. "That's the clock we always call the visitor." The obdurate one sat down again. "The visitor!" he remarked. "What a curious name to give a clock!" His hostess ventured an explanation. "You see," she said, "we call it that because we can never make it go."

True Yankee Pluck

—OR—

The Minute Boys of Cape Ann

By R. T. Bennett

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER III.

The Minute Boys of Cape Ann.

"By the jumping Jehosaphat!" almost shouted Job Tucker. "We'll do it. I'll get dad's rifle, and you fellows know I kin hit a squirrel at 200 yards nine times out of ten."

"If I were a boy I'd join with you, too, Don," said Dolly Prescott enthusiastically. "But as I'm only a girl, like Sukey here, we two can only hope and pray that you will succeed in carrying out your daring plan, which is worthy of you," looking at him admiringly.

"Have you really got spunk enough to fight, Job Tucker?" asked Sukey Stark, turning her laughing eyes full on the sturdy young farm boy.

"Well, you just watch me, Sukey Stark, and if I don't do some tall skirmishing in this here direction tonight you needn't speak to me any more," said he resolutely.

"Well," said Don, looking around him, "are we agreed to make the attempt to take this vessel?"

"Yes," said every boy in turn.

"Then we've got no time to lose. Remember, you must speak to no boy you're not sure of. And above all things, Moses Crick mustn't get wind of what we propose doing, or he'd be sure to row out and warn the captain and thus defeat the whole thing."

"Oh, we'll look out for that, don't you fear. If we could only catch him aboard with the rest, wouldn't we make it hot for him?" said Andy, with a significant grin.

The matter being thus decided upon, the party returned to their boats and embarked for the main shore.

The Wright farm lay about two miles inland from the rocky bluffs of Cape Ann.

It was a tidy, well-kept place, in marked contrast to many of the neighboring farms.

The ground was not well suited for raising extensive crops, being, in common with the rest of the neighborhood, little better than a thin layer of productive earth over a large stretch of granite foundation which, within the next hundred years, developed into valuable quarries of syenite.

Mrs. Wright was a widow, her husband having died a few years before the date of this story.

Being a pleasant, well-preserved little woman and accounted fairly well-to-do, more than one Cape Ann man had cast his eyes in her direction, with a view to marriage and the management of her property.

The most prominent of these suitors was Uriah Gibbs, a widower of fifty, who was a selectman of the township and a deacon of the church.

He kept a sort of general store in Rockport, a

mile or two away, and people believed he had money.

But Mrs. Wright had no intention of changing her condition.

She was perfectly satisfied with the protection and society of her eighteen-year-old son Donald, who, with the help of one hired man, looked after the farm.

The domestic affairs were largely attended to by a pert little miss named Polly Perkins, who the young men in the vicinity declared to be smarter than greased lightning.

At any rate, things went very well at the Wright farm until after the battle of Lexington, when Don began to show unmistakable signs of a patriotic desire to join the American army that then began to form for the investment of Boston town.

But Mrs. Wright, like all good mothers, objected to her son leaving home to become food for powder, so to speak, although it was quite true that her sympathies were fully enlisted on the patriotic side.

And like a good boy who didn't wish to give his mother pain, Don bottled up his enthusiasm, for the time being at least, and stayed at home.

An hour after dark on the day that Oliver Stark had discovered the storeship lying at anchor within a couple of cable-lengths of Thatcher's Island, a score of the Cape Ann boys, who had learned to resent the eruptions of the British parliament toward the colony of Massachusetts, began to gather in the barn of the Wright farm.

Word had been secretly conveyed to the trusted few in a way that only boys can understand, and every lad, though ignorant of what really was in the wind, responded with alacrity, and fetched with him his favorite weapon, which in most cases proved to be a gun.

Most of them came across the fields, in twos and threes, but a few made use of the public road from Rockport.

The barn was a good-sized one, and illumination was afforded by several lanterns suspended from the rafters.

Of course the boys were all eager to know why they had been called together, but until the full number of those who had been invited had nearly all arrived, their curiosity remained ungratified.

Then Don Wright mounted on top of a ploughshare and called the assemblage to order.

"Andy, will you call the names on the list you have and check them off as each one answers?"

The roll-call showed that eighteen boys were in the barn.

"It is understood that all the fellows who have been asked to attend this meeting are heart and soul with me against the oppression of the British parliament, especially as directed against the liberties of the people of this commonwealth."

"We are," yelled the boys, with one voice.

"Then," continued Don, "I will explain the purpose of this gathering. It is, first of all, to organize a company of us boys to be known among ourselves as the 'Minute Boys of Cape Ann.'"

"Hurrah!" yelled a tall, raw-boned lad, known as Josh Putnam.

"Are there any present who object to this proposition?"

There was a dead silence.

"Then I take it for granted that you are all in favor of the idea?"

A chorus of affirmatives followed.

"I am glad to see that you are all willing to do a little something for your country."

"You kin jest bet we are," said Josh Tucker, taking a squint with his squirrel-shooter at a knothole in the wall.

"I have drawn up a paper, a sort of oath of allegiance to the Cause, which I want you all to sign," said Don. "I don't want any boy to put his name down that isn't ready and willing to face the music."

"We'll sign it, all right," said the boys.

"I want you to understand that in signing this paper you are taking a solemn responsibility on your shoulders—that you are risking even your lives for the general good. There must be no backing out after you have once put your shoulder to the wheel."

"That's all right," said Seth Carter, a burly young blacksmith.

"Are you all agreed to this?" asked Don.

"We are," shouted the boys enthusiastically.

"Gil Wayne, you have the paper. See that all hands put their names to it now. When that is done I will go on."

The boys walked up to a smoothboard on which Gil spread the paper and each signed his name to the oath of allegiance after it had been duly read to the crowd.

"Now," resumed Don Wright, "the next thing in order is to choose a leader or captain for the company."

"Don Wright!" shouted the boys so unanimously that there was no doubt as to their selection.

"I thank you for the honor you have tendered me, and will endeavor to prove myself worthy of your confidence," said Don, in a gratified tone.

"You're all right," said several of the boys, while the rest showed that they were glad to serve under the orders of the most popular lad of Cape Ann.

"I shall want assistants, of course. Who will you have for first lieutenant?"

"Andy Richardson," said Oliver Stark.

"Seth Carter," advocated another boy.

"Josh Putnam," squeaked an undersized fat youth named Nicodemus Nudge, who was something of a butt among his fellows, but withal brave, good-natured and loyal to the core.

"You git out, Nick Nudge!" said Josh, poking the fat boy in the ribs with his powder-horn.

After something of a contest between the friends of Andy and Seth, the former was selected, and then the second lieutenant was given to Carter.

"That will be all the officers we shall need for the present," said Don. "We hope to get a few more privates in the near future, but no one must be asked to join whom we do not know positively to be true blue."

"What's the matter with Moses Crick?" chirped Nick Nudge, with a grin.

A general laugh and then a chorus of groans followed this humorous suggestion.

"We've got no use for Tories," said Seth Carter with a frown.

"That we haven't," said Oliver Stark.

"I move that the first thing we do is to clear

out all the Tories in this neighborhood," said Josh Putnam.

"Then Uriah Gibbs would have to go," said a voice.

"And so would Simon North," said another.

"And Silas Cobb and Steve would have to git," echoed Job.

"And Jabez Crick and Moses. Oh, my, what a vacancy there'd be in Cape Ann," said Gilbert Wayne.

"They wouldn't be missed, you kin bet," said Josh.

"Now, boys, we've come to the most important part of the night's programme," said Don. "By the way, Andy, how about the wind? Is there any stirring?"

"Not a breath," reported Andy, after poking his head outside the barn door for a moment or two.

"This afternoon Ollie Wayne was over to Thatcher's Island with his sister Sukey and Dolly Prescott, and while there discovered a British storeship anchored close in to the shore, awaiting a favorable wind to take her on to Boston."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Josh Putnam, while the Minute Boys looked decidedly interested.

"Andy, Job, Gil and I were out fishing on this side of the island at the same time, and Ollie called us ashore and pointed out the brig. Now if that craft isn't loaded up with military stores for the English army in Boston I'm no guesser. She's moored in a tempting position; that is, within less than two cable-lengths of the beach. The crew are not likely to be wide awake a couple of hours hence, and there is no reason for them to suspect that they are not as safe where they are as though they were alongside a Boston wharf. It would be a glorious and useful start for the Minute Boys of Cape Ann to capture that brig and turn her cargo over to the Continental army now besieging Boston."

The proposition was received with great enthusiasm and eagerness.

"We may get a few hard knocks before we get possession of the Britisher," said Don, "but I don't think there will be any serious danger in the enterprise."

"Danger be blowed!" exclaimed Seth Carter, with a determined air. "Who cares?"

Certainly Carter was well able to look out for himself. He was as strong as a young bull, with muscles that rose in bulging cords on his arm. A rough customer to handle at any time, he was particularly dangerous in an affair of this kind.

At that instant a noise was heard on the outside of the barn.

"Go and see what that is, Andy," said Don.

Andy obeyed at once and was just in time to catch a fleeting glimpse of Moses Crick disappearing over the fence of the truck patch.

CHAPTER IV.

How the Minute Boys Took Possession of the Brig.

"Quick, fellows!" exclaimed Andy, sticking his head in at the barn door. "Moses Crick has been spying on us, and is now cutting away across the truck patch as fast as his legs can carry him."

The Minute Boy of Cape Ann poured out of that barn in a twinkling, and urged on by Don Wright's orders to catch the young Tory at all hazards, spread out in eager pursuit.

It was a clear starlight night, so there was no difficulty in making out the fleeing Moses.

And he led the boys a pretty chase, too, for he could run like a hare.

But he was no match for the long shanks of the ungainly Josh Putnam, who, after the first hundred yards across a meadow, quickly overhauled the little rascal.

"Now I've got you, you pestiferous little Tory," he said, reaching out one of his long arms and hooking his fingers into the collar of Moses' jacket.

"Lemme go, will you, Josh Putnam, or 'twill be worse for you, see if it won't."

"Will it? Well, I'm just going to take the chance. What were you spying about that barn for?"

"None of your business, Josh Putnam. It isn't your barn."

"So you won't own up, eh? Well, here's Don Wright. He'll 'tend to your case, I guess."

The boys came up in groups, headed by Don, and they surrounded Moses Crick and cut off all chance of escape if he had entertained such a hope.

"Fetch him back to the barn, boys. He'll have to give an account of himself."

"Won't do it!" protested Moses.

"Yes, you will," said Josh sternly. "Step lively!"

But Moses refused to budge voluntarily and tried to reach for the fence to hold on to, till Josh gave his collar such a twist that it half choked him, and then he concluded to give in, and went along meekly enough.

"Moses Crick!" said Don Wright, when the boys were once more assembled in the barn and the little Tory stood sullenly all by himself in an open space left for him. "What brought you to our farm at this time of night? And why were you spying about the barn?"

"Wasn't," denied Moses.

"Andy, didn't you catch him at it?" asked the leader of the Minute Boys.

"I saw him sneaking away from the barn as fast as he could go," answered Andy.

"What have you to say to that, Moses?"

"Nuthin'."

"What brought you to the farm?"

"Jest makin' a short-cut to Silas Cobb's place," he replied sulkily.

"You know that's a lie, Moses Crick."

"Tain't, nuther."

"Yes, it is. You can reach the Cobb farm by the lane above here. Better own up that you saw some of the boys coming over here and you thought you'd try to find out what was in the wind. Isn't that it?"

"No, 't isn't."

"You're the same little sneak you always were," said Don contemptuously. "Have not the spunk to stand by your guns when you're caught in the act. What shall we do with him, boys? We can't let him go because it looks as if he had overheard all our plans for the night."

"Souse him in the duck pond!" said Seth Carter. "Then leave him here to dry while we're away."

"Cob him!" roared several of the Minute Boys eagerly.

Which meant that he should be held forcibly down upon his stomach while the rest flogged him with kontted handkerchiefs or pieces of rope.

"No," said Don, "he may deserve it, but I don't think it hardly fair. We'll tie him securely up in the loft and let him stay here till I get back, when I will let him go."

"You ain't got no right to tie me up," protested Moses Crick defiantly. "If you do my father'll make you sweat for it."

"If your father knows when he's well off he'll make tracks from Cape Ann, and stay away for good," said Seth Carter significantly.

"My father'll fix you sayin' that," said Moses malevolently.

"When he's ready to start in he'll find me waiting for him."

"If you fellows think you're goin' to capture that powder ship you'll find out your mistake," said Moses spitefully.

"Oho!" exclaimed Don, with a twinkle in his eye. "So you admit now that you did spy on us?"

Moses shot an evil look at him, but said nothing.

"So it's a powder ship, is it? Do you hear that, boys? We must take her now at all hazards. The Continental army needs powder and ball more than anything else at this moment. Much obliged to you, Moses, for the information."

"I hope you'll all be killed—every one of you!" hissed the Tory lad vindictively.

"Well, that's a pious wish, you little villain!" said Gil Wayne indignantly.

"Seth Carter," said Don, "take Moses up in the loft and tie him to a post you'll find there. I'll follow you with a light."

Carter made short work with the struggling son of Jabez Crick.

"Be still, you cantankerous little donkey, or I'll choke you and so save the hangman from doing the job, which is bound to fall to his lot some day."

Don unshipped a lantern from a nail on the wall, and within five minutes Moses was left securely bound in the darkness of the barn loft, while downstairs Don proceeded to instruct the little band of fighters in the few details of the expedition which lay before them.

Everything having been arranged, the eighteen Minute Boys set out for the shore of Cape Ann nearest Thatcher's Island.

Brisk walking soon brought them within sight of the two boats the boys had used that afternoon, and which were snugly moored to a stake on the Stark property.

"We ought to have another boat," said Andy Richardson.

"Then we'll borrow Jabez Crick's. He's away in his sloop and hasn't any use for it tonight. 'Twill be great fun to use that old Tory's property to help out the patriot cause," said Oliver Stark gleefully.

"All right," acquiesced Don, "but you're responsible for its return, remember."

"Come on, Job," said Ollie, "and give me a hand with the boat."

(To be continued.)

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 8, 1926

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

DISTANCES BY THE PANAMA CANAL

Distances from New York to San Francisco by water by the former route were 13,135 miles; via Panama Canal, 5,262 miles. New York to Hawaii, former route, 12,800 miles; by Canal, 7,000 miles. New York to Manila via Hawaii, former route, 17,800 miles; by Canal, 12,000 miles.

GAME FROM ARGENTINA

United States Trade Commissioner Brady, in a recent report from Buenos Ayres, states that there is at present a plentiful supply of Argentine quail and partridges available for export. This game could be placed upon the New York market to great advantage during the months of May to September, the difference in seasons between the United States and Argentina making it possible for the former to have a certain supply of this food at an unusual time of the year.

CORAL

Genuine coral may be red, pink, white, blue, yellow, green or black, the last being the rarest and most highly prized. The next in value is the red coral, which is susceptible of a high polish and is most in use in jewelry, being the coral of commerce. Corals are roughly classed under two heads, the horny corals and the lime or stone corals. To the former belong the red and black forms, and to the latter, the white. Red coral is chiefly found in the Mediterranean. The corals found on the Atlantic Coast of Florida are the lime or stone corals, which are the reef-building forms.

MOVING IMAGES SENT BY WIRE OR WIRELESS

At Malmaison, in the presence of General Ferrie, head of the French Military Telegraph, and Professor Fabrice of Sorbonne, experiments were recently made which are hailed as establishing the discovery of a method of television which, it is asserted, results in instantaneous transmission of moving images by wire or wireless.

The demonstration marked a step in the extended research by Professor Belin, discoverer of

a means of transmission of photographs by wireless, and Professor Hollweck, chief of experiments in the Radium Institute.

The scientists succeeded in transmitting from one end of the laboratory to the other images of a moving finger as well as of several small objects moved before the sending apparatus.

Professor Belin and his partner are confident that within a few months they will have solved satisfactorily the problems of television, so that at one end of a telephone the subscriber will be able to see the person to whom he is talking.

The method used is a combination of mechanics and electricity based on the use of electrons which permit the transmission of images or parts of images in a time shorter than the duration of a retinal impression, which is the sixteenth part of a second. In sending a photoelectric cell instantly transforms the luminous intensity of the ray into electrical intensity, and at the receiving end a jet of electrons spraying into a vacuum controlled by these impulses gives an inverse reproduction.

LAUGHS

Jimmie—What are you doing? Tommie—Washing the jelly off my hands. Ma's a finger-print expert, you know.

"Does your wife do fancy work?" "I'll say so. She does some mighty fancy work to get my week's salary from me."

"What's the proprietor of the Plunkville House all swelled up about?" "Some guy wanted a house label to stick on his suitcase."

Mother—Did you enjoy your ice cream soda, Dickie? Dickie—Yes, ma; they wuz seven other boys lookin' in the winder at me.

Man—What became of that mirror I bought for my wife? Maid—The missus made me take it back, sir. She said it didn't do her justice.

"And what is that lad of yours going to be when he grows up?" "I rather fancy he'll be a golf caddy." "Really!" "Yes. The last tanning I gave him he turned round and told me I wasn't holding the stick the right way."

During a railroad strike a young and green engineer was put on to run a train. On his first trip out he ran some distance beyond a station he was to stop at, and on backing up he ran as far the other way. He was about to start forward for another attempt when the station master shouted:

"Oh, thunder! Stay where you are and we'll move the station."

A little girl was enjoying a slide on the pavement when, to her consternation, her heels flew up and she fell with great force upon the stones. A woman who was passing saw the accident and ran to the child's assistance. She picked her up, brushed the dust from her clothes and asked kindly: "You poor little mite. How did you fall?" The child, with tears streaming down her cheeks, sobbed, "Flat, ma'am!"

An Unlucky Raid

In the good old days of the Bow street runners, when highway assaults were rife, and solitary postchaise travelers never journeyed without pistols in their pockets, and tremor at their hearts; when strange feats in the shape of starlight robberies were boasted of, and a "Knight of the Road" aspired to be called a gentleman, the following incident occurred:

One afternoon in early autumn, close upon sunset, a couple of well-dressed men, driving a light gig, in which was a poor jaded-looking horse, stopped at a wayside posting-inn, not a hundred miles from Bath, and requested accommodation for the night. They were fashionably attired, and spoke in condescending tones to the landlord and servants, using a few words now and again of town slang, as young bucks of the first water were proud to do in that way.

Giving the horse and gig over to the care of the hostler, they adjoined to the public room, and called for some light refreshments in the shape of drink, ordering a supper to be served later. The landlord himself brought in the brandy-and-water.

"What's this story about a great highway robbery near here last night, landlord?" questioned one. "We heard of it on the road, coming along. Is it true?"

"Quite true, sir. Ah, gentlemen, it is a dreadful thing—though clever, I must say. My Lady Cantifere with her two daughters was driving home across the heath an hour or two after midnight, having been to a ball, when the carriage was stopped by four mounted horsemen with cocked pistols. The lady screamed and fainted, the young ones screamed and kicked, and the gentlemen, those audacious robbers, proceeded politely to rifle the ladies of every ornament they wore."

"Scoundrels!" interjected one of the guests.

"More than that, your worships. What should those bold blades do but invite the damsels to tread a measure with them! It was a fine night, as you may perhaps remember, sirs—the moonbeams shining bright on the bare heath. Out of the coach they handed them, and footed it in a minuet; dancing, it's said, to perfection, as though they were used to lead out the king's own daughters every night of their lives. The young ladies screams ended in laughter; the baroness woke up from her faint and abused them all, robbers and daughters together. Oh, they are bold, those gentlemen of the highway!"

The two gentlemen, listening to this, had gone into bursts of laughter.

"But what of the men-servants?—what, were they doing?" spluttered one.

Only two were in attendance, sir, it seems; my lady's footman in the dickey, and the postilion on the horses; and while two of the robbers were thus doing their dancing, the other two stood guard over the men, each with his pistol cocked and his hand on the trigger, ready to fire at the least movement."

"And the upshot?"

"The young ladies were bowed into their coach again, all with stately ceremony, and the robbers,

after wishing them a very courteous good-night, rode off at a canter, with every jewel they had possessed, small or large, costly or simple, and my lady's purse into the bargain. They may well boast that they lead merry lives, those men! Fine commotion they have caused round about us to-day, as you may imagine, gentlemen. Everybody's talking of it."

The landlord, being called for elsewhere, retired; the travelers sipped at their glasses, laughing away, and conversing with one another in an undertone. Dusk came on, and the elder and taller of the two addressed his friend in a different tone.

"About time to see after the horse, isn't it, Jim? It's dark enough."

"I was just going to, answered Jim. And draining his glass, he went away to the stable yard.

Looking about him, with the air of a connoisseur, after watching his horse eat up its oats, he made himself acquainted with the arrangements of the stables. Some five or six horses were in them. In the box next to his own stood a splendid animal; evidently valuable.

"A better horse nor yourn, sir!" cried the hostler from behind, in a quiet voice; and the gentlemen gave a start, not thinking anybody was near.

"Ay; mine has seen good service, and he has been worked hard lately," answered the stranger, good-humoredly. "A very fine animal this, as you observe. And stepping back to look critically at it, "Were my horse in good condition it might not be much inferior to this. They are not altogether unlike—about the same height, and much the same in color—brown."

With the last words, the stranger went back to the house, whistling. The hostler peered after him through the dusk while he made his comments.

"You have got a cheek, master, whoever you may be; and a impudent cheek it is. Going and comparing of the two hosses like that!—this fifty-guinea beautiful animal, and that there wretched old hack o' yourn! What next! I wonder who they be, when they be at home?"

And, with that, he locked the stable door.

"Well!" cried the elder traveler when the other one returned. "Any chance?"

"Never had a better chance in our lives," was the answer. "In the next box to ours stands one of the grandest animals you ever saw—same color same size, or about it; worth a little fortune. And a set of silvermounted harness hanging up by him."

"Silver-mounted?"

"Think so. Looks like it. We have got a rich chance, I tell you, Wade."

Supper was announced in due time, and the two hungry men did justice to it. Afterward they sat over the fire, with pipes and grog, and retired to their room about eleven o'clock.

The room, a double-bedded one, was not exactly on the ground floor, but it was not much higher. A few steps leading from the staircase conducted to it. The travelers had chosen it in preference to one at first assigned them on the second floor, one of them observing that he liked to sleep near the ground in case a fire broke out in the night, of which he had a peculiar dread.

The first thing they did on entering the chamber was to double-lock the door and put the candle out; the second was to softly open the window to stretch their necks out of it as far as they con-

veniently could, and to wish the moonlight was "hanged."

"Nothing of a drop, that," observed Wade, measuring with his eye the space to the ground. "A child might jump it. Shut down the window, Jim, and let's have a pipe. Hang that moon again! I think you were wrong in foretelling it would be a dark night."

Shutting the window as softly as he had opened it, Jim and his friend, each taking a short, well-worn pipe from his pocket, sat down to smoke. From another pocket came forth a flask of some kind of liquor. Thus they made themselves comfortable, and seemed to forget all about bed.

At any rate, neither of them attempted to go to it. They sat on and smoked, and drank at the flask occasionally, and whispered together in hushed tones. At last the old clock struck two. One of them rose, drew aside the window-curtain, and looked out.

A suppressed shout of exultation broke from him.

"Luck is with us again. It is now raining and the moon is gone. I knew rain was coming."

"Man alive, don't make that row," retorted the other. "We don't want the house woke up."

Putting away their pipes and flasks, they opened the window with crafty gentleness, and dropped on the ground outside it, one after the other. The night was very dark—no light, or glimmer of it, was to be seen anywhere.

Making their way round cautiously to the coach-house and stables, Jim produced a master-key which undid the locks. The stable-door he undid was the one that had the valuable horse in it, and he was surprised to find what an easy lock it was. Then, while the other man kept watch, he hastily and noiselessly attached the horse to their own gig, using the harness he had admired so greatly. The rain was dashing down smartly, which tended to deaden other sounds.

When all was ready they cautiously led the horse and gig out of the yard and to a distance beyond it, got in and drove away at a spanking pace.

So far they were well satisfied with their night's work and congratulated themselves on the valuable prize they had captured in the horse and harness. It's true the horse appeared to require the whip pretty frequently, and Jim, who was driving, did not fail to administer it.

"Lazy beggar! he has stuffed himself out with corn," cried he. "You shall fast all this day, my gentleman, and that will bring you into working order. What a pelt it is!" looking up at the pouring rain. "Should say this was the clearing shower."

"What'll the job bring us in, Jim?"

"Twenty pounds clear, I reckon. And an old hack thrown in to complete the bargain."

On the heath now, they began laughing over the past night's adventure there, as related to them by the landlord. They had no fear of the highwaymen themselves, not they; such gentry do not prey upon one another.

"Hang it, Jim! can't you drive faster?" cried Wade, suddenly.

Jim made no answer. He was beginning to feel somewhat puzzled; for, unless he was mistaken, the beautiful horse betrayed unmistakable signs of giving in. Their own wretched animal could do

as well as this. Presently it stopped—dead from exhaustion.

"What the deuce is the matter with him?" demanded Wade.

"Be shot if I know. He seems dead beat. It's so dark one can see nothing. Wish that they would come out!—the rain has ceased."

"Well, this is a pretty go!" exclaimed the other, as the horse, in spite of the whip and word, refused to move. "Brought up, before one's half beyond danger, with a stolen horse! You must have been mistaken in the worth of the animal, Jim; never knew you to mistake one before."

"It beats me hallow," returned Jim, his crest-fallen tone betraying some alarm. "As to being mistaken in him, I know I never was—there! Something extraordinary must ail the horse."

He jumped out of the gig and began feeling the animal with his hands. At the same moment the coy moon burst out from behind the clouds and shone in all her splendor. Jim felt the horse, stared at it, and stared again. The other in the gig was also gazing curiously. Simultaneously a shout of dismay, followed by an imprecation burst from both of them.

They had stolen their own horse!

Some mutual recrimination ensued—Wade accusing Jim of having made a mistake and opened the wrong stable; Jim vowing by all that's blue that he had opened the right one.

"Any way, we've got the harness," pleaded Jim.

The remark caused Wade to turn his eyes on it. Its silver points were glittering in the moonlight. A closer glance, and then another angry shout burst from him.

"Look here, you fool! Here's a 'crest.'"

"Hey—what?" cried Jim, turning around.

Sure enough. The silver-mounted harness bore a family crest with its Latin motto, and could, no doubt, be identified anywhere. Certainly this night's anticipated spoil was not lucky in any way.

Next morning the landlord of the inn was intensely surprised at the disappearance of the travelers, and at the spiriting away of some harness that belonged to the young Viscount Dare. He stood in the stable-yard talking with his hostler.

"But for me his lordship's horse would ha' gone, too!" cried the hostler stolidly. "When I see one o' the two gents a-poking and peering about here last night under cover o' the dusk, and see him gazing at the fine animal with hungry eyes, and next watched him fidgeting the stable-locks, it struck me what he might be after—the wanting to have a try at changing their own sorry hack for this one. So the last thing at night, before turning in, I changed the horses; putting theirs in the best stable, and t'other here, and made him safe with my bar and padlock which can't be picked. And they've just been gone away with their own."

"Why didn't you change the harness as well?"

"Well, I never thought of the harness."

But in the course of the day the messenger brought the harness back—and did not wait to ask for that of the travelers.

So the landlord, by the bargain, got a set of plain harness, which really was not bad, and he let the unlucky thieves alone.

PLUCK AND LUCK

CURRENT NEWS

AGED DUCHESS GETS BOAR-HUNTING RIGHT

Although the Duchesse Douiariere d'Uzes of Paris is now in her eightieth year, she is still fond of sports. Recently she took the oath as Lieutenant de Louveterie before the Rambouillet Civil Court. She is the first woman to hold this office which entitles her to a uniform and requires her to keep a pack of hounds. In return she is permitted to hunt wild boars in the local state forests twice a month.

HORSES OUTPULL OXEN

Keen competition for the honor of owning the world's champion pulling team of horses and oxen is a development of the recent test for weights drawn by ox and horse teams at Amherst, Mass.

The tests were made by a dynamometer and showed that two teams of horses each hauled the equivalent of fifteen tons a distance of twenty-seven and one-half feet, while a team of oxen pulled the equivalent of thirteen and one-half tons a distance of nineteen feet.

LIFE SPAN NOT INCREASED

The expectation of life at birth has increased greatly in the past few years (in London, for instance, from forty-one years to fifty-three years), but the expectation of life of the elderly has not increased in proportion. In other words, more people live to an old age now than used to, but they do not live to any older age. The upper limit of man's life span has not been raised appreciably, indicating that perhaps despite all that science can do, the human body will simply wear out within the usual time.

HIGH-SPEED TYPEWRITER

One thousand one hundred and sixty keys, comprising forty different alphabets, constitute the keyboard of a high-speed typewriter recently invented by a Washington lawyer, Fred A. Dolph. The inventor, who can write 150 words a minute on the ordinary typewriter, claims he is able to turn out 283 words a minute on his new machine.

Each alphabet on the typewriter extends in a single vertical line. Each line carries a capital shift, character shift and release shift. Instead of printing each letter separately, an entire line is assembled at one time and then pressed on the paper by a special lever. The machine has no ribbon, as the special lever inks each line when it presses it against the paper. Mr. Dolph states he has been working on the invention for twenty-five years.

WATERCRESS IS FINE FOOD

Has the common watercress some real value as a food and a medicine? Evidently the answer is yes, to judge from investigations made recently by Dr. S. Monckton Crompton of London. He has experimented with both animals and humans.

The ages of the human subjects varied widely; in all cases they gained in weight, improved in appetite, their skin became much more healthful, and constipation, if it existed, was entirely removed. Doctor Monckton also studied the cress

itself to discover the chemical basis for its dietary virtues, and found that the residue from the extracted juices of the plant gave marked reactions with all the test solutions for alkaloids. A glucose present in the form of potassium salt was first isolated. He found also that watercress contains the three vitamins, A, B and C, together with salts of potash and iron, in addition to a considerable quantity of iodine.

SWINDLERS CAUGHT AS THEY TAKE MONEY FOR CASTING OFF "EVIL EYE"

Mme. Follouvrier, living in the village of Faverges, Haute-Savoie, Geneva, was recently visited by two foreign wanderers, who informed her that a large treasure was buried near her house but that it was guarded by mysterious spirits who had cast an evil eye on the spot. The couple added they could overcome the evil eye and reveal the treasure, which would become the property of madame. All they asked for their generosity was 1,000 francs.

Mme. Follouvrier said she had only 20 francs in the house and gave the men the money, asking them to return for the balance in a few days. Madame told the story of her good fortune to the village priest, who told the police and a trap was laid. As Mme. Follouvrier was paying the remainder of the money to the Bohemians in her house, gendarmes appeared and arrested the swindlers, to the great surprise of madame.

STUDENTS STRAND THEMSELVES ON DESERT ISLE

The story of more than two weeks spent as voluntary castaways on the desert island of Mona in the Caribbean Sea about fifty miles from Mayaguez, Porto Rico, was told by six Syracuse students who arrived a few days ago on the Red D liner Maracaibo. The party was led by Professor Parke H. Struthers and brought back more than 350 specimens of tropical life.

They left Mayaguez on June 29 on a small native schooner and arrived at Mona, which is inhabited by only four native families, a day later. They landed with a small stock of provisions, which they supplemented with wild goats they were able to catch.

So hot was the weather that the island's modest crops had withered. Water was hard to get and the natives were near starvation.

On the island the explorers discovered a number of natural caves, which they described as having rare beauty. They said the caverns were bright with green and yellow stalagmites and stalactites, some of which had come together, forming pillars which supported the roof. The walls glowed with phosphorescence, they said, so that even the deepest recesses were illuminated. In some places they were filled with water.

The schooner had been told to return on July 15. But when that day came it did not appear. It arrived the next day, however, with the excuse that it had been becalmed. The students were also becalmed on their way back to Porto Rico, for it took them fifty hours to traverse the fifty miles.

BRIEF BUT POINTED

LABORATORY FOR EARTHQUAKE

Two laboratories for the scientific investigation of earthquakes are in process of erection at present. One is being built at Imperial University, Tokio, Japan, and the other is being constructed at Pasadena, Cal., by the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

"CHANNEL FEVER"

Seasickness has a strange counterpart in what is now called "channel fever"—a set of distressing symptoms that sometimes strike passengers when a ship, after a rough ocean voyage, enters a landlocked harbor where there is very smooth water. The effects are something like that of real seasickness, and evidently are a result of the sudden change of environment equilibrium.

WORKERS USE MASKS

Gas masks are worn by workmen laying a tennis court in Hollywood, Cal., on account of a deadly poisonous gas developed by the chemicals employed in the special patented process of cement work they are applying. But even wearing masks, they can work only in short shifts of not longer than twenty minutes at a time. The cement for this process can be laid only at night, by artificial light.

"LOST FLOWER" FOUND

A species of flower which was discovered about the year 1750 and then lost for 175 years has been independently rediscovered by two scientists, Dr. E. T. Wherry of the United States Bureau of Chemistry and Dr. J. E. Benedict of the United States Museum. This rare flower is known as the pink turtlehead. It was found near Marlboro, Md.

The pink turtlehead grows in wet ground, reaches a height of about three feet and has pink flowers resembling the neck of a turtle.

MOTHER NATURE DIRECTS METEOR DISPLAY

On the same day each year, August 10, old mother nature sends showers of blazing meteors skidding through the heavens at forty miles a second. They burst, flame and vanish when they strike the denser air of the earth.

Scientists say the phenomenon is due to the collision of the earth with an immense cloud of stones, fragments of comets, revolving around the sun like the earth, but in the opposite direction. These fragments are mostly gas and an exceedingly small proportion of solids. It is seldom that the stones crash through the atmosphere to the earth.

WHEN NIAGARA WAS DAMMED BY ICE

Niagara Falls was still on the morning of March 31st, 1848, and many people for some distance from the Falls actually thought they had become deaf during the night, when they awoke and heard no thundering of the water. The winter had been a severe one and the ice on Lake Erie had been exceptionally thick. Warm weather and the subsequent breaking up of the ice came

suddenly. During the last week of March a stiff northeast wind drove the broken ice floes up on the bank and piled the ice into miniature icebergs. On March 30th, a gale came from the opposite quarter and hurled the ice back with such force that it formed an enormous ice-dam at the head of Niagara River. This held back the stream until the water above the falls was completely drained off; thus the falls were silenced for nearly 24 hours, after which time the ice gave way beneath the pressure of the water behind it and on April 1st the water was again going over the falls as usual.

MONEY; ULTRA-VIOLET RAYS EXPOSE OTHER FRAUDS

A new development in the quartz lamp, which makes it possible to distinguish immediately between animal and mineral matter, was demonstrated recently by its manufacturers.

The new lamp will give merchants a quick and sure means of distinguishing real pearls from those of synthetic manufacture, and will enable them to detect cotton threads in supposedly all-wool cloths.

Counterfeit stocks, bonds and paper moneys can be distinguished from genuine ones by the aid of this light, for the slightest difference in the composition of the paper shows in a difference of color under the ultra-violet light. Erasures or changes are also clearly detectable.

The lamp test is also applicable to oils, since those manufactured from animal fats or vegetables give off a fluorescence, while oils of mineral extraction retain a lifeless color.

From a cultural standpoint the lamp also holds out hope that a multitude of manuscripts written on parchment may now be deciphered. Since parchments are of animal origin and the stylus and fluids with which the writing was done were made from minerals, the chemical action resulting is still discernible under the light, even though the first writings were erased with pumice-stone to allow the parchment to be used a second time.

Though the value of the rays has long been recognized, the new invention permits a much more extended use of them.

The power of the invisible ultra-violet rays to produce different tints and degrees of brightness in different materials has been vividly illustrated to New York theatre audiences, because this power has been used for some of the most brilliant theatrical effects in recent years.

Costumes white or dull in color under ordinary light are made to blaze and gleam with many hues under ultra-violet rays.

These spectacles were based on the researches of Professor R. W. Wood of Johns Hopkins University. By flooding the members of the Association for Advancement of Science with ultra-violet rays in 1921 he gave the first public exhibition of the odd effects since popularized on the stage.

Ultra-violet rays have since been used widely in deciphering palimpsests, or twice-written manuscripts.

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